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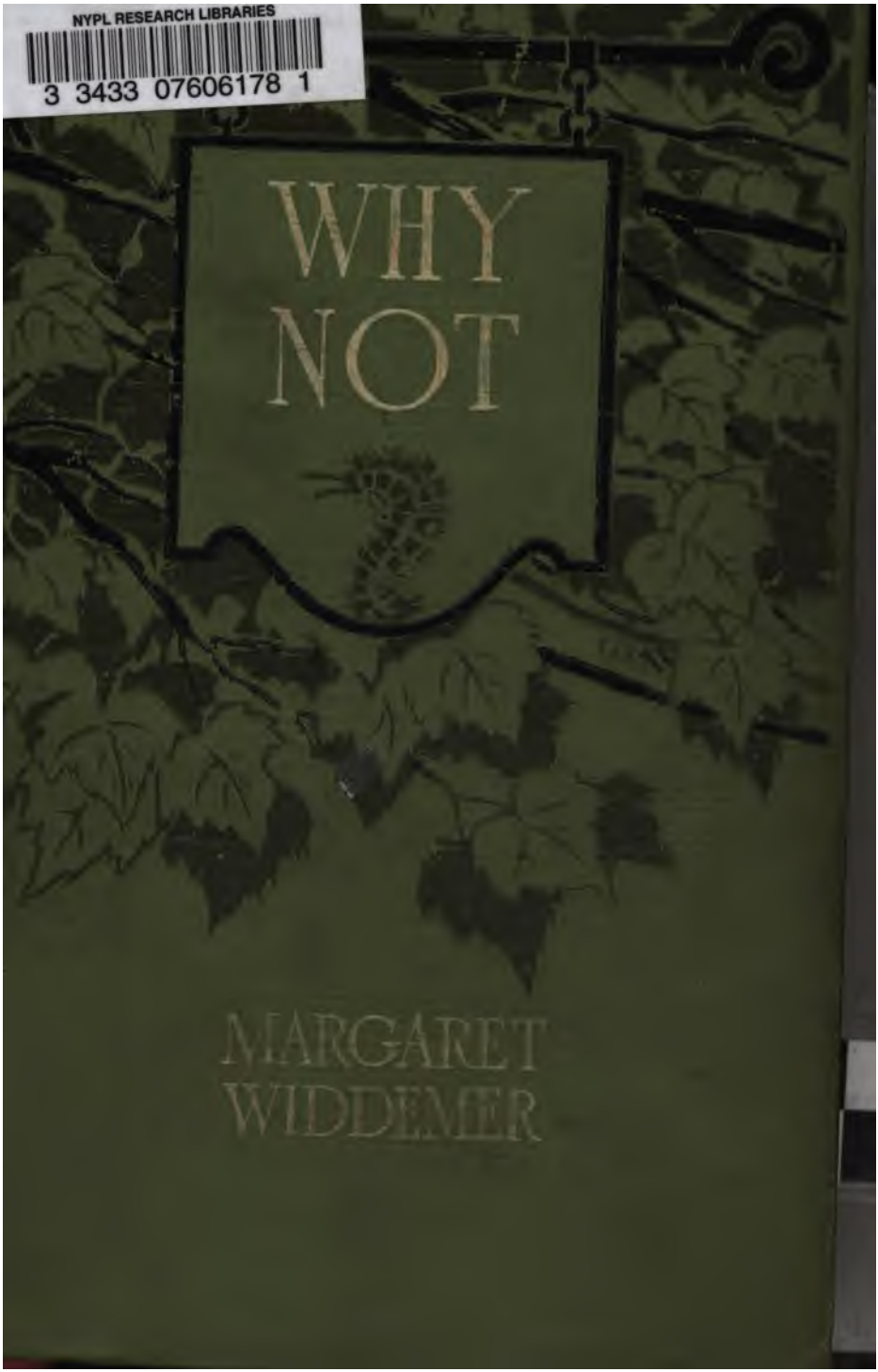

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WHY NOT?

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"ROSAMOND"

WHY NOT?

By

MARGARET WIDDEMER

Author of "The Rose-Garden Husband"

Illustrated

New York

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1915

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WHY NOT?

CHAPTER ONE

TOUCHING THE ELEPHANT

"ANNE ROSAMOND GILBERT!" cried Cousin Jenny in a voice that would have been pained if it hadn't been so shocked.

Anne Rosamond, young and a little defiantly wistful, leaned back in the big old shabby Sleepy Hollow armchair. It was the only comfortable chair in Grand Uncle Alvin's dun old rep-furnished parlour, and the only reason he wasn't occupying it himself to-day was that Grand Uncle Alvin had died — rather crossly — a fortnight before. Anne Rosamond had been sitting in the chair ever since, when it was possible, just to see how it felt. She'd been wondering, off and on, ever since she was a small, wistful child of five.

"Well?" she replied now to Cousin Jenny's agonised voice. Her big dark eyes, a little sad before, lighted with mischief, and she held her lips suspiciously straight. "Well, why not?"

"Why not?" said Cousin Jenny pathetically. "Oh, my dear, that's not a proper answer! Why —

why — a nice girl *shouldn't*. Now just consider. Your poor uncle left you three thousand dollars and this house, and it's all you have to live on. And here you say you're going to spend it!"

"Well," said Anne Rosamond rebelliously again, swinging her foot, "if he could spend twenty thousand dollars building his old Alvin Sanborn Memorial Church, just so people never could have a chance to forget him whether they wanted to or not, I guess I can spend the only three thousand dollars he left me to remember myself by!"

She sat up very straight for a moment, because the habit of eighteen straight-backed years is hard to overcome. Anne Rosamond hadn't had a very leaning-back childhood. Then she remembered, and curled herself luxuriously down again. If she was a little frightened at the too good times for properness in her own plans, nobody knew it but herself.

"Anne Rosamond," said Cousin Jenny firmly, "your Cousin George thinks, and so do I, and so would any sensible person, that you ought to take that money and go and learn to be a stenographer or a secretary or a domestic science teacher. There's enough to keep you nicely till you are through and have a start. Then you can come back to East Warren and live with us, and commute to the city. I'd gladly ask you to stay with us and not work, dear, but — but you know —"

"You darling, certainly I know," said Anne Rosa-

mond, springing up with one of her swift, graceful, unexpected movements, and running over to put her arms round her cousin. Cousin George, Cousin Jenny's husband, was an in-law, and his only modern attitude was a firm belief that female relatives should not be burdens. "Won't you please let me tell you, Cousin Jenny?" she asked caressingly. "I — I suppose it will seem foolish to you. Things always do — don't they? to people who remember you when you were little. They think everything you do is because you're a little girl yet. They forget your mind grows up too. But it's this way. Once upon a time, oh, a very long time ago, wasn't there something you wanted very, very much? Something you couldn't tell about wanting for fear people would laugh at you — something you wanted so hard that you thought you'd die if you didn't have it?"

Cousin Jenny's faded grey eyes dropped to her woollen-gloved hands for a minute.

"Yes," she owned, slowly. "Yes, I don't know but people might have feelings just like that."

Anne Rosamond clasped both slim, capable hands over the arm of Cousin Jenny's chair, and her voice softened.

"That's what I've had," she explained. "You know, Cousin Jenny, Uncle Alvin was — well, he didn't pet people, and little girls that haven't anything but uncles ought to be petted by them, I think. It isn't hard to do. But he didn't."

"Oh, hush, my dear, he's in Heaven!" protested her cousin hurriedly.

"Well, if he is," said Rosamond with one of her swiftly childlike changes from wistfulness to elfishness, "if he is, I'll guarantee he has three hard-worked little cherubs and at least two ministering angels waiting on him hand and foot — no, hand and wing — this minute! . . . Never mind that. But at least, even if he is dead, you'll admit that he wasn't exactly a dream-giving person."

Cousin Jenny nodded. "No, no, dear," she assented. But she looked a little puzzled. Cousin Jenny hadn't been given many dreams herself, and she didn't know quite what Rosamond was driving at.

Rosamond's shell-coloured cheeks flushed deeper, and she stared up at the what-not as she went on talking eagerly.

"When I was little," she said, "and I came here first, I think I'd been used to dream-giving persons. I don't remember father or mother very well, but they must have been the kind of parents little children enjoy having, because I was so surprised at first at the things Uncle Alvin wouldn't let me do. Things I might as well have done as not. Little bits of children can tell the difference in people, you know. I remember how dreadfully I wanted to be lifted up to touch that ivory elephant on the what-not, and it never occurred to me that he wouldn't do it till he

didn't. And he never kissed me good-night once in my life that I remember. He didn't see any reason why he should, I suppose. His idea was, I think, that if there wasn't any reason why you *should* there was every reason why you *shouldn't*. And — oh, well, there were too many things to count up, little foolish things that used to hurt dreadfully, till I got sort of don't care all the time. When I was older it was just the same way. He'd give me a red dress when I was wild for a blue one; just as pretty a dress, maybe, but not the one *I* wanted. Or I'd get a history book for Christmas when he knew I wanted a story-book or a sash dreadfully. And — there wasn't any point you could get at him to love him. I think maybe that was the worst. He always saw to it that I had enough to eat and wear, and that I went to school, but — oh, Cousin Jenny, such lots of people can give you *those things*, and so few can give you the silly little kind things you'd much rather have!"

"Yes," said Cousin Jenny thoughtfully, "yes, I know."

She, too, looked up at the ivory elephant, yellowing undisturbed on the exact spot where he had stayed for a generation. Suddenly she began to talk, low and breathlessly, as if she were afraid the elephant would overhear her.

"I always wanted a little magic lantern," she said, "always. Just a little tiny one that you could use

in the parlour, you know. My brother had one when he was small. But he never would let me touch it — and he got the camels in upside down nearly every time. And I know I could have fixed them right! He gave it away to little Robbie Sloan next door when he out-grew it himself. I didn't dare say I wanted it — it would have been too silly. But I've always wanted it — always. I know it's foolish. But even now, when George is out at lodges — you know he belongs to several — I can't help thinking what a comfort it would be to have just a little lantern, to throw pictures on the living-room wall, lonesome nights. There's a lovely place for the sheet right between the windows —"

She stopped short, and looked frightened. But Anne Rosamond was the sort of person you found yourself telling intimate things to very easily. They always seemed to be the sort of things it was natural for her to hear, and yet she wasn't greedily interested in that way which makes you certain that what you say is going to be passed along.

"Why, there now!" she said soothingly, and patted Cousin Jenny's hand, "of course you want it. And you ought to have it. Maybe you will, sometime soon — there's no telling. Why — why, then, you understand, Cousin Jenny!"

But Cousin Jenny looked bewildered.

"I don't see what that has to do with —" she began.

Rosamond bent toward her and spoke gently.

"No, dear, I don't believe you do quite, after all," she said. "Because many a time, I suppose, you've had money enough to buy your lantern, and bought necessary clothes instead, or maybe carpets or things to eat. But — I'm going to take that old three thousand dollars that Grand Uncle Alvin forgot to make over to an Uncle Alvin Fund somewhere, and — buy my lantern!"

She sprang to her feet, and stood over her cousin, tall and pretty and alight. All the years when she had been crushed down by a very hard and severe old man who was very sure of his own righteousness were forgotten. Her face was bright with the mere anticipation of happiness and good times and adventure at last. Cousin Jenny looked up at her, vaguely uneasy at her blitheness. It didn't seem quite right to her that anybody should be as carefree as Rosamond looked just then.

"Please tell me what you mean, Anne Rosamond," begged Cousin Jenny plaintively. "Nothing very — rash?"

Rosamond dropped down into the Sleepy Hollow again, and answered. All the hunger of youth for happiness was in her face as she replied.

"Nothing very dreadful," she reassured. "Only — I'm going to try to realise some of my dreams. Oh, I do want some dreams so! All the little foolish ones I've been saving up for years. Then the big

ones. Then — why, then, perhaps, dear, I'll have practised enough to help other people realise theirs! There must be lots of dreams floating about that could be realised, if people only thought so." Her eyes lighted with mischief again. "Rosamond, Realiser of Dreams!" she said. "Wouldn't it make a lovely signboard? And under it, for a motto, 'Why Not? said the Caterpillar.'"

"The caterpillar?" inquired Cousin Jenny faintly.

"It's a motto from the classics," said Rosamond truthfully, for if Lewis Carroll is not a classic, who is? "You know," she went on, "there isn't really any reason why people shouldn't have the things they want the most. They don't have them generally, because they never think they can. If they thought they could, they could — and so they would. 'Why Not? said the Caterpillar.' That's a lovely motto, Cousin Jenny. I intend to carry it through the world, like E Pluribus Unum, or Votes for Women, or something."

"You aren't going to start anything very wild, are you, dear?" ventured Cousin Jenny again.

"I am going to start," said Anne Rosamond definitely, "by touching the ivory elephant."

And she went over and mounted a haircloth chair which enabled her to take down the animal in question. She sat down and nursed him.

"He feels just the way he always was going to feel!" she said ecstatically. Her face was as flushed

and happy as a child's. There had been so pitifully few realised dreams in Anne Rosamond's life! "There are more things than this that I want," she mused. "I want a Japanese silk nightgown. And a house off in the woods somewhere. On the edge of the woods, near the water, you know, and all my own —' to live in a house by the side of the road and be the friend of man.' And a Livonian bloodhound. I don't know what he looks like, but I read about him once in a novel Grand-Uncle Alvin didn't know I had. I always imagined him liver-coloured and brown in stripes, like a zebra. . . . And a knightly lover. I know just exactly what *he* ought to look like. . . . And to tell fortunes for a living."

"Anne Rosamond!" exclaimed Cousin Jenny.

"Not in a wrapper, like the ones on boardwalks," reassured Anne Rosamond. "In lovely, really fortune-tellingy clothes." She went on with her list. Cousin Jenny sank down in her chair like a doll whose sawdust was being removed. "And I want to find some one who looks up to me abjectly, because I've always been told I was too young to have judgment. I'm sure," said Rosamond wistfully, "that I could have judgment with a little practice. And I want to lie flat on my back watching stars for a whole evening without being told to come in out of the dew. And to kiss just one man without being engaged to him. And to have ice-cream in the forenoon."

"And you think you can do all that on three thou-

sand dollars?" asked Cousin Jenny as unsympathetically as if she had never known an unsatisfied wish in her whole life. "Anne Rosamond, you're crazy!"

"Oh, but some of them won't cost anything at all," said Anne Rosamond eagerly. "The stars, for instance, and the person who looks up to me. And there's another thing — I want to be called just Rosamond, without the Anne. Don't you think you could do that?"

"That's foolish," said Cousin Jenny.

"I'm going to try to have it happen, though," said Rosamond. "I should feel much prettier, I'm sure, and more ornamental, some way, just Rosamond. So please address my letters that way to Wanalasset.

"*Have you got the place picked out?*" inquired Cousin Jenny, lighting on the one significant fact in italics.

Rosamond began to play with the elephant. He was a large, elderly, expensive animal, but she swung him gaily by the tail. If there was a little awe of him still in her heart, it didn't show.

"I have," she said. "Yes'm, I have. Wanalasset, N. J. No mosquitoes (I don't in the least believe that) and a dear little concrete bungalow that cuddles in between the woods and the lake just the way I want it. Easy access to —"

"Are there any policemen near?" interrupted Cousin Jenny as Rosamond was about to recite more paragraphs of a recently devoured booklet.

"My circular didn't say, or the letter from the agent," said Rosamond. "I suppose they thought it would sound rude to say 'no policemen,' as if you were a desperate character, and it might be an object to you whether they were there or not. But there's a heavenly view, and a telephone. And of course there'll be the Livonian bloodhound. I understand they can pull down two men at one spring, at least the one in my novel did. I'll get him as soon as I can. But I expect I'll be busy for a while, realising dreams. I won't have such a lot of time to think about policemen. I'm awfully behind — just think, eighteen years of things I wasn't allowed to have, to catch up with!"

Rosamond was beginning to feel a little daunted by all these arguments, and it occurred to her that it would be a very nice thing if middle-aged people didn't always try to take the courage out of you. But she went on bravely.

"I told you, dear," she said. "I shall try telling fortunes for people, card or palm. I do it lots better than most of the ones you pay fifty cents to for it. And —" Rosamond's face turned elfish again —"realising dreams for people. Large dreams, so much. Medium-sized dreams, *so* much. And perhaps little ones thrown in free, if my clients are very nice and need dreams dreadfully. 'Why not?' said the Caterpillar."

She leaned back again and smiled bravely at Cousin

Jenny. She did love her cousin very much, and wanted to please her. But when you've been severely brought up, and your first chance of freedom is singing its triumph-song to you, especially when what you want to do isn't one bit of harm, why — it's very hard to give up just because people say you should.

"Well, I hope you'll think better of it," said Cousin Jenny weakly. Somehow the references to the Caterpillar unnerved her. She was so limp by this time, to tell the truth, that she did not feel fit for further argument. Besides — well, besides, to poor Cousin Jenny, who had never realised that she could say "Why not?" to anything in the course of her whole well-trained life, there was a feeling in the room of gay adventure. Seeing confident young Rosamond faring forth on her quest for happiness felt almost like reading one of the paper novels Cousin Jenny's starved soul fed on, where all the beautiful impossibilities you must not hope for yourself are coming to the heroine in the last chapter.

"Don't do anything rash till you've told me about it first, will you, dear?" she pleaded, rising. "What — what are you planning right now?"

"Nothing so very awful," said Rosamond, smiling. "I am going to buy myself the Japanese doll with a squeak that Grand-Uncle Alvin wouldn't let me have when I was seven. Then I shall get a pink saucer and a jar of double cream, and feed the thin cat I

always meet opposite Green's livery stable. Then I shall get some clothes I need, and some tacks — you always need tacks when you move. Then I shall pack, and leave for Wanalasset, to become a professional Realiser of Dreams. And, oh, I forgot to tell you, I won't catch cold, because my bungalow has a fireplace, almost exactly like ours here that Grand-Uncle Alvin always kept boarded up because he thought it was unhealthy."

Cousin Jenny rose to go. She knew very well that George would spend all supper-time telling her things she should have said, when he got home that night and was given the dutiful report of the day she always made him. But she said no more. There seemed somehow nothing more to say.

"I'll be back to-morrow," she said, hesitating at the door.

But before the next afternoon there came a large, nubbly package to Cousin Jenny's house. It was there before she had time to dress to go over to Rosamond's. And pinned to the top of it was a note directed in Rosamond's own hand.

"I forget to tell you," it said, "that I've rented the house at Wanalasset. And I've gone there with the elephant. Here is a present to remember me by. Don't forget that I love you very much, and that there's no reason why you shouldn't have everything

you want, if you only think so. 'Why not? said the Caterpillar.'

"Your loving
"ROSAMOND."

Cousin Jenny opened the parcel with hands that shook.

"It's a dress-length," she told herself, but she knew better.

Under the papers lay, magnificent, black-glittering, a child's magic-lantern.

Cousin Jenny forgot that she ought to telephone to George to rescue Rosamond from the concrete bungalow of her desire, where she was even now doubtless being happy in dreams of stars and a striped bloodhound. But. . . .

"I knew I could get those slides right the first time," she said musingly. She ran across the room like a young girl, and shut out the afternoon sunlight. "I wonder," she said happily, "if thumbtacks would hold up the sheet?"

CHAPTER TWO

THE SQUIRE

ROSAMOND, sitting on the train with the ivory elephant in her lap, was quite as happy as it is possible to be in this world of grief. The last time she had gone over this route had been an orgy of window-opening and window-shutting, of picking up glasses and transmitting quite useless inquiries to very bored conductors; and the conductors had — this was the worst part of it — been so uniformly sympathetic! To-day they only looked at her with interest, and that was probably because it is not specially ordinary for pretty girls to travel with ivory elephants, even when the elephants are done up in flowered tea-cosies, all but their heads.

Rosamond watched the telegraph-poles ducking past the windows, and made happy plans.

"I'll get into the summer-resort a little way from my bungalow about three," she planned. "That ought to give me time to see my nice agent. I wonder what he looks like? His telephone voice (how Uncle Alvin would have had a fit at 'phoning long-distance!) — it sounded as if he was thin and bald, but kind-hearted. . . . I don't see why an agent

shouldn't be kind-hearted!" she protested mentally to an echo of what Grand-Uncle Alvin would have said at this point.

She planned to select what furniture she needed from the house she had left behind, before its tenants should come in. There was enough to spare plenty. She thought she had better see her bungalow in — literally — the concrete, before she chose what to take. There were some very good old pieces in Uncle Alvin's house, and one old coloured print of the *Constitution* doing something — she could hardly remember what — to the *Guerriere*, was worth untold gold, she remembered.

"Not foxed a bit, and *mar*-vellous margins!" the old gentlemen who had occasionally dropped in on her grand-uncle were wont to remark.

"Maybe I can sell it to somebody who appreciates its unfoxyness," decided Rosamond. "If it has marvellous margins and all that, it ought to buy me two or three of the kind of pictures I want myself, nice cheerful murally-looking things. If it has a good home and kind treatment with people that will appreciate it, it oughtn't to kick."

The train arrived, and she took her suit-case in one hand, and her tea-cosied elephant in the other, and sprang out.

"Thank goodness I don't live *here!*" she said; for the summer resort avenged itself for having to be neat and pretty over by the ocean, by being as ugly

as it could where the trains came in. But her agent's sign spread near, in sight of the station — that was one comfort.

The office, when she entered, seemed to be empty except for one man. But he was tall and broad enough to make up for nearly two ordinary-sized ones, and sitting very still in a swivel-chair behind a desk.

"I've come to see the concrete six-room bungalow up on the lake, that I telephoned you about!" said Rosamond, coming in like a breath of fresh air. "Oh, what a lovely cat you have! (I'm Miss Gilbert.)"

"It *is* a nice cat," said the agent consideringly. He was a rather quiet-spoken person, with black thick hair and small black side-whiskers, and the general upstanding, fresh-coloured air of one of the English Squires in Grand-Uncle Alvin's Morland pictures. He smiled at her in quite a fatherly way, and she sat down and picked up the cat.

"Would you like to go and see the bungalow now?" he asked, without a bit of the preliminaries or red tape Rosamond had braced herself for.

"Oh, may I, *now?*" said she radiantly, all the little loosened curls around her face nodding joyously with her little jump of pleasure. Her cheeks burned rose-red, as they always did when she was happy.

The agent smiled again, involuntarily.

"I shall be very glad to take you there," he said. "I can take you up in a carriage now, or, if you

would rather wait a half-hour, we can go up in the motor-car."

"Oh, the motor-car, please!" said Rosamond. "And could you take a few things up in it? Is it a big car? Would you mind?"

Nobody would have minded, with Rosamond's beseeching brown eyes on theirs like a hungry collie's. The agent may have breathed a silent prayer that the "few things" wouldn't be a bedroom set or anything like that, but he only expressed aloud an ardent desire to fill the tonneau with anything Rosamond wanted.

"Then may I leave my elephant on your hands till I come back — and my suit-case?" asked Rosamond, dimpling.

When the agent said she could, she fled out the door, and was out of sight almost before the agent had closed it courteously after her.

"Milk," she said to herself consideringly, "and bread and butter and eggs. And a frying-pan and a spoon. I have cups and a plate in my suit-case. . . . And a cot and blankets."

Milkmen generally live in the wilds of somewhere else, it has been observed, perhaps because they have to stay close to their cows and see that they are contented. So Rosamond found none. She had to compromise on condensed cream and coffee. She bought candles, too, in case the lights weren't turned on; two tall twisted red ones with gilt on them. She

loved candles, and these were only five cents apiece. She had always imagined — she had wanted them so badly — that they would be at least a dollar a pair.

She lingered so long over the buying of them that she had to get the other things in a comparative hurry. Even so, she was back at the agent's inside the allotted half-hour. There were more agents there now, but her particular one, the big man with the little black side-whiskers, was waiting for her at the door. He looked more like an English Squire in a coloured picture than ever.

"I'm ready," she said to him breathlessly. "It was only some butter and some candles and things — oh, and — just one cot."

She was in the machine before she got around to mentioning the cot, because she had an idea that it would be just as well to have him committed to carrying her before he heard the worst. But he only smiled.

"Just a minute," he said, standing by the side, "I have to say something to Simpson."

Simpson, a small, nervous person, was said the something to, the agent got back into his seat with a swiftness unexpected in so big a man, and they were off. Rosamond decided that he must be about six feet two.

"The cot's waiting for me at the store on the next corner," she said meekly. She still felt deprecating. It was such a big, shiny car (it was of the Rolls-

Royce persuasion, though at that period of Rosamond's life one car looked exactly like another to her) that it seemed rude to it to use it for mere butter-and-cot-carrying.

But whether the agent's early manners had been so carefully formed that he couldn't look otherwise than pleased when in company, no matter how he felt, or whether he was happy in the idea of bungalow-purchase that the cot implied, he smiled as cheerfully as if his car had been built for a delivery-wagon.

"We'll stop for the cot, then," he said; and not only did stop for it but superintended its bringing out, and put it in the machine himself. Then they went swiftly bungalow-ward, the cot sticking rakishly out of the corner of the car, like a cigar in a man's mouth.

"The bungalow's west of us about a mile and a half," remarked the agent, speeding up a little.

"You haven't at all the kind of voice you had over the telephone," said Rosamond, holding on to her hat.

The agent turned to look at her, leaning toward him with both pretty gloved hands framing her face.

"Telephone?" said he. "Oh, I see. But it wasn't I who telephoned you, you know. It was the agent."

At these astonishing words Rosamond let go her hat in order to gasp better.

"Aren't you the agent?" said she.

He shook his head. "Why, no," he said. "I thought you knew. I'm the owner."

"*Oh!*" said Rosamond, and looked him over from a new point of view.

"You really do look lots more like an owner than an agent," she conceded happily. "I'm awfully glad."

She had visions of him, on the spot, calling on quarter-day and lashing his gaiters with a whip, while she wore a smock-frock and curtsied as she handed out the rent. She had forgotten for the moment that she was going to buy.

"Have you got an ancestral domain — with hounds grouped on the front lawn?" she demanded. She didn't quite dare ask him if he was a Master of Foxhounds, because she'd heard that they had nothing nearer a fox in these parts than an anise-seed bag.

"And you can't very well ask a man if he's a Master of Anise-seed-Baghounds," she thought swiftly.

He laughed, and Rosamond decided that in spite of the black side-whiskers he was younger than she had thought.

"Something of the sort," he said. "But my dogs are mostly bulls, and the bungalow we're going to see isn't ancestral in the very least. I put it up for a sort of study about two years ago. My own place is a half-mile back of it."

He stopped abruptly, because he had been on the verge of confiding to this joyful young stranger with the pink cheeks and brown eyes and tonneau full of cot, his private reason for building that bungalow, when here was a perfectly good ancestral domain only a half-mile away. The reason was quite personal, having been a need to escape at intervals from a much-loved but very trying mother, who had since died.

"I must tell you," he continued, "that my only reason for selling the bungalow is that the public, that summer-resort crowd, has a right-of-way up from the lake through the wood, within hearing distance of the place. I've made up my mind that I'd rather part with the place altogether than be worried by people yelping 'Along Came Ruth' all day whenever I want to be quiet or think."

Rosamond reflected that nothing could be better for the profession she intended adopting, but all she said was:

"I'm so sorry — but I don't mind a bit myself, because I almost never think. But it's very nice of you to be honest and tell me!"

They had reached a place now where the road became discouraged with life, and reduced itself to a mere footpath.

"We'll have to walk now," he explained.

"Don't you tie your auto to a tree or something?" suggested Rosamond prudently.

"It isn't necessary," he explained. "This is all my land, and people don't trespass much."

So they crossed together through a strip of woodland which Rosamond inwardly hoped she would be allowed to trespass in. Then there was a fence — the gentleman evidently liked privacy — and inside it stood, white and low and quaint, the bungalow of her dream.

"Oh!" she said rapturously, "it looks just like its photograph!"

"Well, what did you expect?" asked the Squire, looking amused. "Things are apt to, you know."

"People always warn you that they aren't going to," said Rosamond mournfully, "at least *old* people do —"

She stopped in terror — there was no knowing how old the Squire was: and she knew, by her experiences with Grand-Uncle Alvin, that if you want things out of men you had better be very ingratiating in your ways till the gift's over. She eyed the Squire furtively again. Nobody who was young and happy *could* want to wear a little oblong black whisker before each ear: but on the other hand nobody who was old and decrepit could pick up a cot with a bundle of blankets tied to it, and tuck it into a tonneau with one hand. Oh, well, people didn't ever think they were old anyway, whether they were or not. She took heart again, and the Squire unlocked the door and stood aside to let her pass through.

"It *is* going to be a realisation!" she cried before she had time to think. Then she pulled herself up. But after all one's landlord has a right to know some things, and this one looked so very interested!

"A realisation?" he asked.

"Has it hot and cold water and — and matches?" asked Rosamond hurriedly, repenting.

"It has," he said. "Also stationary tubs, porcelain bath, and electricity. So you won't really need the matches, though I'll throw them in. But why realisation?"

He seemed persistent. She could see him evicting her if she didn't tell.

"It's — it's just nonsense," she said, suddenly shy. "I'll tell you after I've bought the house, if you don't mind, Squire."

For some reason the Squire looked, for a moment, acutely surprised. But "It has six rooms, you see," was all he said. "I am willing to paper it freshly for you if you like, or have the walls distempered over again."

Rosamond followed him from room to room, with rapture. Downstairs there was a big living-room with a fireplace, a dining-room with a heavenly bay-window and lavishly-planned diamond-paned, built-in closets. The kitchen was all blue, with a gas-range and tiling. Upstairs there were three bedrooms, each duly fireplaced, and a bath. The walls were all she could desire, rough and tinted.

"You needn't repaper at all," she said graciously, quite unconscious that repapering is a boon rarely conferred on the ordinary purchaser. "That is, except my own bedroom. That is going to have pink roses with silver stripes behind them, and little cherubs on the border, if they can be found. You see —" for the Squire had had another attack of looking acutely surprised —"I saw a paper like that once when I was little. I wanted it on my bedroom wall. But I never got it, of course — people don't give children such things, even if they ask for them aloud. So I want it *now* to pay up for the *then*. Do you see?"

"I see," said the Squire briefly, but with a curiously understanding note in his voice.

It was curious, thought Rosamond, but lots of people *did* see. Who would have suspected good, moralising Cousin Jenny of yearnings for a magic-lantern? Yes, even a big black Squire with bungalows to dispose of might have dreams he wanted to realise.

And then she looked at him again, and decided that in his case at least she was wrong. He couldn't — not anybody who looked as sensible and business-like as he did.

"I'll take this bungalow," she said, as if it were dress-goods. "The price, I understand, is two thousand dollars. I should like a reduction for cash."

She felt as if this was very grasping, especially as

the Squire had been so nice about repapering and carrying things; but Grand-Uncle Alvin had always said it to people he was buying things of. Rosamond was sure it would be unbusiness-like not to.

"Certainly," said the Squire. "In consideration of its being cash I am prepared to shade the price."

"Shade" evidently meant "lower."

"Can I have it for nineteen-sixty?" asked Rosamond eagerly. "That forty dollars would just—"

She stopped. What she had been going to say was that it would just build a nice little fortune-telling booth at the edge of the path, out of sight of the porch, but where summer-resorters couldn't fail to pass it. But you are wiser not to confide everything to a prospective seller.

"You may," said the Squire laconically. "But I must tell you that your deed will forbid your reselling or renting for five years. Some brute from the boardwalk wanted to buy it and make it into an ice-cream parlour."

"Oh, he *was* a brute!" agreed Rosamond, oblivious of the comparative status of a fortune-telling stand. "No indeed, I won't sell."

"The desirability of a purchaser is more to me than the price," said he; and it sounded so like a copy-book heading that Rosamond never saw it was a compliment. "Will your people occupy it soon?" he inquired as Rosamond knelt down on the floor and began to explore her suit-case for the purchase-price,

which she was tempting Providence by carrying with her in bills.

"Oh, my parents, you mean?" she said. "I haven't any. I'm almost out of relatives anyway."

"You are buying it, then, for — whom?" pursued the Squire.

"I am buying it," said Rosamond firmly, rising with a roll of bills in one hand, and the pink bedroom slipper she had hidden them in, in the other, "for myself, Anne Rosamond Gilbert, two years over twenty-one and with money to pay for it. I'm going to live here alone, and be happy." So far she was admirably firm with the Squire, but she spoiled the effect completely by coming close to him and beginning to coax. "Ah, *please* let me be happy!" she said. "Didn't you ever have a time when you felt as if you'd been told what to do by your elders and betters long enough?"

The Squire looked, for the moment, as if he had — and so he had, undoubtedly, being human. But besides being human he was a good and responsible-minded man, and Rosamond didn't look a day over eighteen.

"You haven't run away from home, my dear child?" he asked.

She drew herself up again.

"You aren't old enough to be anything like as fatherly as that," she said rebukingly. "But as it seems you have to give a history of your past life

every time you buy a little bit of a bungalow with a string to it — I was twenty-three in February. My father and mother died of pneumonia, close together, when I was five. I have since resided with my mother's uncle, Mr. Alvin Sanborn, in East Warren. He died a short time ago. I have rented the house he lived in, and I am buying this to live in and — and exercise my profession peacefully." (This last was a sudden inspiration meant to impress, and it did. The Squire was looking, by now, as apologetic as a scolded St. Bernard.) "I haven't my birth or vaccination certificates about my person, but I gave the agent I thought you were all necessary references. And — and —" Rosamond was laughing by now — "I've scolded till I'm out of breath."

"I'm very sorry," said the Squire, smiling relievedly as she seemed likely to forgive him. "And the house is yours. Only — pardon me — but you *do* look young."

Whereupon he sat down on the desirable built-in settle on the left side of the fireplace, and began to write something on a torn-in-two envelope with his fountain-pen.

"I haven't the title-deeds about my person," he said, "any more than you have your vaccination — wasn't it? — certificate. But I'll draw up an informal agreement now, so you'll be sure the house is yours, and to-morrow we can finish things at the office."

"Oh, thank you!" said Rosamond. "And would you mind just keeping the money? You may have a safe or something up at your ancestral domain, and I don't see any here."

"You aren't going to stay here all alone to-night?" demanded the Squire, in spite of his late lesson.

Rosamond sat down on the right-hand settle and smiled at him. "Why not?" said she, suppressing, however, any reference to her authority the Caterpillar. "Aren't there any neighbours?"

"My house and this are connected by telephone," he said, "but your nearest neighbours are a settlement of poor families a little way below the rise here, on the Ames Lane Road."

"Isn't it a lovely sunset?" replied Rosamond sweetly. "And thank you *so* much for bringing up my things. Would you mind getting them for me now?"

The Squire lifted one black eyebrow. He had the gift, so highly valued by such as own it, of working them separately.

"Certainly," said he, and went straight after them. If they had been friends of long standing one might have inferred that the Squire wanted to shake Rosamond. But he was evidently unbreakably polite.

"Thank you," she said sweetly when he returned cot-laden. She stood framed in her newly-acquired doorway, looking as gentle and yielding as possible.

The Squire, who had the cot under one arm, and the groceries, ingeniously swung in the blankets, dangling from the other, said severely, "You are very welcome. Shall I put it up for you?" He was referring to the cot.

"Oh, no, don't bother," said she. "And I'll meet you at the agent's at ten-thirty. And — would you mind telling me your name?"

He looked at her as if he did not in the least believe his ears.

"Why, you've been calling me by it!" he said. "Squire. John Squire."

Rosamond looked at him blankly. Then she caught her breath. Then, dropping the pink slipper that she had held all this time, she sat down on the doorstep and laughed and laughed and *laughed.*

"I — I'll explain to-morrow," she explained belatedly to John Squire's back. For the second time he had walked swiftly away. And presently she heard his machine, too, retreating.

"And I believe he has my condensed cream!" said Rosamond.

CHAPTER THREE

ALICIA LAURETTA

THE Squire — or John Squire — evidently, in spite of walking off that way, had feudal ideas about the stranger within his gates. Rosamond had finished her supper and put up her cot, and was basking in the rays of an excellent pink-and-gold sunset, remembering pleasantly that she hadn't to wash her dishes till she got ready. And up the footpath appeared, coming slowly and heavily, like the genius of everything she had fled from, a black elderly figure.

"I'm Martha, one of the servants from Mr. Squire's, miss," the figure informed her. "Mr. Squire sent me up to stay all night with you."

"That was very kind of him," said Rosamond untruthfully, "but you see — but I haven't anything for you to sleep on."

"That'll be all right, miss," said Martha placidly, setting down a small satchel. "One of the men will be here in a minute now with everything like that."

"How did you get here?" inquired Rosamond with a gentleness which meant that she was exceedingly near losing her temper.

"In the little cart, miss," said Martha agreeably. "It can get nearer here than anything else. It's gone back now for bedding and such."

"Very well," said Rosamond ominously.

She sat down on the settle and picked up the other half of the envelope the Squire had written his informal agreement on.

"Dear Mr. Squire," she wrote blackly with a stubby pencil, "my purchase-price was not intended to defray the cost of a personal keeper, merely of the building and land. With this please find the keeper returned to you. Yours truly, A. R. GILBERT."

"Would you mind going back in the little cart and taking this to your master?" she asked Martha sweetly.

"Not at all, miss," said the well-trained Martha, and turned sedately back to meet the little cart.

Rosamond stood by the door feeling deeply wronged. Meanwhile the men solemnly carried in the cot for Martha, with a certain air of its being an informal funeral. Rosamond watched them stonily till they went away again. She was still standing rigidly wronged, though the position was growing a little tiring, when — Martha came back. With her, mournful but still determined, came the Squire!

"This is oppression!" said Rosamond. "I thought I explained to you. I'm *not* tenantry. I am an informally agreed purchaser, and I didn't buy Martha when I bought the house. (It isn't that

you aren't as nice and good as you can be, Martha," she threw in. "It's a principle.)"

"Here is your condensed milk," was the Squire's rather commonplace reply. "I really don't mean to oppress you, Miss Gilbert. But I must insist that Martha stay with you to-night."

He handed her the can of evaporated cream, which looked very small emerging from the inside pocket of his large spring overcoat, and — fled. But still there, very much keeping her place in more senses than one, stood the quiet and respectful Martha.

Rosamond, looking at her, *knew* that the only way to get rid of her was to put her out bodily. And Martha was of a settled and substantial build, very much like a staid elderly hot-water-bag. Well, it was only for one night. After that she would get herself some sort of servant, "and just as young as I possibly can find," she determined. She smiled her quick, flashingly affectionate smile at Martha.

"I have to go wash my dishes now," she said sweetly. "Make yourself as comfortable as you can, Martha."

"Oh, *I'll* wash the dishes, miss!" cried Martha, as if anything else would hurt her feelings badly.

"I'll dry them, then," said Rosamond: and over the mutual doing of them (there was one cup, one plate, one knife, fork and spoon, and a sauce-pan) the two became pleasantly friendly. After all it is just as well, the first night in a strange house.

Rosamond went out and sat on her informally agreed doorstep, and watched little white stars coming out and dropping doubles of themselves into the brown lake-water, and was so happy that even a butler and two footmen in the room beyond wouldn't have worried her. She had a half-mind to lie down on the grass then and there and look up at the stars, but — the grass looked a little chilly. After all it was only May, and the grass was going to keep on belonging to her forever and ever and ever! So after a while — it seemed daringly late, but it was really only half-past ten — she came in and went to bed. And Martha's even breathing from the end room was a comfort, after all.

She met the Squire next day at the agent's, and signed title-deeds and other things, then took a noon train back to East Warren after her furniture.

"You will bring back a servant with you, someone to be with you at night?" inquired the Squire in a way that can only be described as gingerly yet dogged.

He was walking over to the station with her. As he had noiselessly possessed himself of her suit-case she couldn't well get rid of him.

"Will you tell me, please," she asked in exasperation, "why people feel that I have to be looked after so hard? I know heaps of girls who go around doing

just exactly what they please, and nobody dreams of worrying at them. And it seems to me as if everyone I knew camped on my trail, trying to see that I'm a good little girl and keep my hands and face washed."

"I don't know," said the Squire, knitting his straight black brows. He was obviously trying to answer satisfactorily. "There is something about some people," he said finally, "more than others, that makes you feel as if you wanted to take care of them. Maybe that's it."

"Whatever it is," said Rosamond, "I shall try to get rid of it. Thank you very much for all your kindnesses, Sq — Mr. Squire, even the ones I didn't want."

And then the train was kind enough to come.

Happily, the moving-van men at both ends of her journey showed no desire to take care of her. So she chose what she wanted of Grand-Uncle Alvin's furniture, had it sent to Wanalasset, and arranged to have it delivered at her bungalow, without having any one else ask her questions on painful subjects like chaperonage.

"When I'm a fortune-teller they can't!" she said triumphantly; and fell to sketching on the receipt the van-man had given her a neat but not gaudy fortune-telling booth, and a costume to wear in it.

"Hours," she decided, "from ten to four, with time for luncheon. And evenings, maybe. And a

costume. . . ." Decision as to whether the costume should be Greek or Oriental cheered the journey till its end.

She glided stealthily into her bungalow, the second morning after she had left it, with a delightfully triumphant feeling of Eliza-having-crossed-the-ice, with all the bloodhounds baying helplessly on the other side. She closed the door after her as softly as if the Squire or Cousin George, whom she credited with very much the same designs on her freedom, might hear it click, rush down, and order her off to stenography. She crossed to the stairs with the same stealthiness, and went up to the room she had chosen as hers, to change her suit to a lighter dress. It was a white dress she put on, made exactly like a gown of the first Empire. "Why not?" she said to Grand-Uncle Alvin's disapproving shade as she buttoned it at the back. "It does cheer you up so to feel pretty, and the frock will wash as well as a checked gingham one!"

She went downstairs to watch for the van-men, who had promised to be there is an hour or so. Rosamond knew less than she was destined to about the manners and customs of movers, and she had an idea that they might be on time.

She heard, as she stood on the stairs, the sound of a window being cautiously raised.

"Oh, a burglar!" was her first dismayed thought, "and not one thing in the house for him to burgle!

And maybe he'll be cross about it and want to shoot me before I can convince him."

She resolved to provide something to appease the next one, and meanwhile to see if this one would compromise on some very good luncheon she had in her suit-case. But, tiptoeing into a dusky corner under the stairs, where she could watch the burglar at his doings, she found that appeasing was not likely to be necessary.

The entrant by the kitchen window was only a small, barefoot girl in a blue woollen dress which had been none too attractive in its best days, and was torn and stained with constant wearing till now it was less a dress than a cover. Rosamond, watching her, ceased to be terrified.

"She's playing house," she said to herself, remembering her own solitary plays when she was little.

The child moved about, now that she had closed the window after her, with the calm of long possession. She crossed into the empty living-room with her tangled head held high, and began to talk to herself in a slow and gracious voice:

"I think I'll wear my white frock with the rose-pink sash to-day, Auntie," she said. "And my white shoes an' stockin's. Oh, my dolly? No, I ain't goin' to take her with me. We're only goin' for a short drive in the victroler, you know. Yes, thank you, dear Auntie. . . . No, I ain't tired — I've only practised my pianner-lesson a little bit-o-while, an' — an'

— done some scrubbin'-out for poor Mis' Simmons, down the road a piece. . . . Yes, it *was* kind o' me. You know you says we orto be kind to the poor —"

She sat down on the settle for a moment, as if her poor little scratched, bare legs *were* tired, and took a long, involuntary breath.

"I think she might make Avalene scrub that old floor once 'n a while," she remarked to herself in quite a different voice. "O-oh, I'm tired!"

She leaned her untidy mop of brown hair against the wall, and shut her eyes for a moment, as if she really was very, unchildlikely worn out.

"I think she ought, too!" said Rosamond, slipping out of her nook. She ran to the child and put an arm around her.

The little girl did not move or seem surprised.

"I won't do it again, Auntie," she said. "It *is* too much work fer a lady." Then, as if she was startled to find that the arm about her was warm and real, she opened her eyes with a little cry of alarm.

"Oh, 'scuse me, lady," she said frightenedly. "I — I was just pertendin'. I didn't know people was here."

"And you thought I was part of the pretend, didn't you, dear?" said Rosamond tenderly, still with an arm about the child. "Does she really make you do the scrubbing — and you're as thin as a rail, you poor little thing!"

"Thin folks can work the hardest," the child as-

sured her. "Well, it's 'cause I'm a Homes-for-the-Homelesser, I s'pose. Avalene's her own daughter, and course she favours her and puts on me. They always do."

"What's your name, dear?" asked Rosamond.

"Alicia Lauretta," answered the child promptly.

Rosamond laughed. "No, honey, the real one!"

The child looked down, and wriggled her bare toes ashamedly.

"Well, it's Allie, then. But it could be Alicia Lauretta, couldn't it — an' just called Allie for short 'cause they didn't know my real birth?"

"Why, of course it could — why not?" said Rosamond soothingly.

The child looked relieved.

"Where'd you come from?" she asked suddenly.

"Somewhere inland," answered Rosamond.

"Did you buy this house, or just come here to pertend? But grown folks don't."

"Sometimes!" said Rosamond. "I may have come here just to meet you and help in your pretendings — who knows?"

"Nobody seems to be specially kind to the poor little thing," she decided inwardly. "And here's a splendid chance to try the realising of dreams on the dog. . . . Tell me about it, won't you?" she coaxed the child. "And don't you want to wash your face and hands upstairs in the bathroom? The gas-heater's lighted. Then you can come downstairs and

have some lunch with me — if you can put off your drive in the victrola."

Alicia Lauretta looked frightened. She was a thin little thing, tousled and big-eyed, with a pointed little face.

"It seems like a pretend yet, just a wee bit, doesn't it?" said Rosamond cheerily. "Well, we'll think it is. Shall I play I am Auntie? . . . Come, Alicia Lauretta dear, it's time you had your bath."

Alicia Lauretta's big eyes lighted up, and she nestled against Rosamond like a small reassured stray cat.

"Yes, thank you, dear Auntie!" she said; and trotted regally up the stairs, as if she had dwelt in marble halls all her life.

Rosamond fished in her ever-useful suit-case till she found her kimona. It was much too large, of course, but usable.

"Let me have your clothes right away," she said. She proposed to wash them out. "Here's a towel and soap."

Alicia Lauretta poked her garments obediently through the crack of the bathroom door, and Rosamond tore happily downstairs to wash them. She was having a lovely time.

The underclothes were a simple problem enough — it was the blue woollen frock that presented difficulties. But Rosamond finally got everything clean. Then she swiftly built her first fire in her beloved living-

room fireplace, and improvised twine lines across it for the better drying of the poor little ragged things. They needed mending worse, even, than they had washing, but there were no sewing-materials nearer than the moving-van, wherever that was.

The clothes had been steaming before the fire quite ten minutes, and Rosamond had had time to set out on one of the settles her lunch from the suit-case, before Alicia Lauretta appeared. She was holding her draperies up with a difficulty increased by the fact that one hand was clutching also a worn, folded piece of paper, obviously precious. She was very clean, and had even washed her hair.

"Come close to the fire, dear, so your hair will dry sooner," said Rosamond in her most Auntielike tones. She put a pillow from the cot on the floor for Alicia Lauretta, laid a napkin across her lap, and pushed the food on the settle within reach.

The child sank down before the fire with a happy little sigh.

"It don't seem 'zactly real yet," she said.

Rosamond took her comb out of the suit-case and began to comb out the little girl's hair. It was pretty hair if it had been properly arranged, thick and curly. It began to dry and fluff very gracefully under the heat of the fireplace.

The child ate her lunch in a species of happy daze, and Rosamond, when she had put away the comb and

washed her hands, lunched too. When they had both finished she took the remains of the food out to the kitchen, came back and sat down by Alicia Lauretta again.

"Now tell Auntie all about it," she said.

Alicia looked at her with half-frightened eyes.

"Do you believe that, too, about pretendin' things makin' 'em come true?" she said. "I didn't,— not 'xactly. But this is almost a come-true."

"Why not?" Rosamond said, smiling. "I think people can generally have what they want if they think so — and go after it!"

But this was beyond Alicia Lauretta.

"Well, I wanted *this* to come true," she said, opening her clenched hand, and showing the grimy scrap of paper that she had never released, all through her meal.

Rosamond took it and smoothed it out. It was a page from St. Nicholas, part of a serial story, with a Reginald Birch illustration in the centre of the page. A solemn-eyed, picturesque Birch little girl with clustering curls and an elaborate frock was standing with her arm around a pretty young lady beside her, and saying, "We must be kind to the poor — You said so, Auntie dear!" The pictured child's face was really not unlike poor little ragged Alicia Lauretta's; it had the same delicate shape, and the same big-eyed wistfulness of expression.

"I wanted to be *her*," Alicia Lauretta explained

simply. "So I pertended. Our class clubbed together an' took *St. Nicholas* for the year. An' it had this serial — Little Lady Loveliness it was called. She was awful rich, an' everybody loved her. She lived with an Auntie that was awful young an' pretty, an' all she did was *rich* things —'cept when she got stolen for a while. An' even then her sweetness disarmed folks, it said. (It don't though, really.) An' I *loved* it. So I pertended I was her, an' had just been stolen an awful long time. But pretty soon Mis' Simmons took me an' Avalene out o' school, cause we moved an' it was too far to walk. An' I knew I wouldn't see the *St. Nicholas* no more, so —" Alicia Lauretta's head dropped tragically —"I *tore out the piece to remember it by.*"

She stopped after this fearful confession, and looked as if she wished she hadn't told. And tearing out a whole page of a magazine when only two cents' worth of the whole year's issue belongs to you, *isn't* a proper thing for small girls to do. Not even if the magazine happens to be your hungry little soul's entire nourishment.

But Rosamond didn't feel that way about it. She only shut her eyes hard for a minute, because they felt wet.

"Your clothes are nearly all dry, dear," was all she said. "You'd better put them on."

The dress was wet still, for it was of a heavy fabric, but the other things were all right to put on. "How

did Mrs. Simmons come to get you from the Home for the Homeless people?" she asked.

Allie's little face, bent over the tying of a string, changed suddenly to sullenness.

"I was throwed on a screen," she said briefly.

"Thrown on a screen!" said Rosamond. "Did it hurt?"

"Like movies," said Allie. She ceased from her efforts to make an occasional buttonhole coincide with a fortuitous button, down the front of her dress, and shut her mouth tight.

"Ah, tell Auntie," coaxed Rosamond softly. She knew, whatever the story was, that it hurt, but she wanted to know, and help if she could.

"It was a Homes-fer-the-Homeless lecture in prayer meeting," said Allie reluctantly. "They go round to churches throwin' pictures of you on a sheet, showin' you bein' homeless. They take the pictures of you when they first find you, as hungry as anything, to touch people's hearts. Then they wash you and feed you an' give you checked dresses — but the picture's there always — *always!*"

She began to cry a little; softly, as children cry who know they must not be overheard.

"Mis' Simmons has mine," she said fiercely. "She keeps it on the parlor mantel between Avalene graduatin' from primary an' her an' the late Mr. Simmons just havin' been married. And — and — *she shows it to people!*"

"Why, the brute!" said Rosamond hotly.

On Allie's thin little face dawned a most pathetic expression. She was being understood, it said, and by a grown person. Could such a miracle happen? She got up sedately.

"Guess I'd better be goin'," she said.

"Come back to-morrow, dear," said Rosamond. "I'll have my furniture in by then, and you can watch me arrange it and put up the pictures. I'm almost sure I have some fairy-books you'd like."

But Allie shook her head.

"I don't believe I can," she said wistfully. "You see, I'm really a *very* good worker, but Mis' Simmons thinks she'd rather have a husky nigger. And she says I got uppity ways — not wantin' the baby to use my toothbrush too, an' things like that. She says a nigger won't be so apt to put on airs. An' she's heard from the Homeless woman — she's comin' to-morrow."

Rosamond shivered.

"And what will happen to you?" she asked.

"Whatever 'tis, 'twon't be Mis' Simmons, anyway," said Allie drearily. "Only — only I wisht I was pretty. Maybe 'f I was they'd somebody adopt me, where there was pettin', an' a bathtub. Well, good-bye, an' thank you. It was a very nice bath, an' the sandwiches was great."

She turned to go, buttoning herself up as she went: a thin little drooping figure, pathetically unexpectant

of anything that was a free gift. An'— an'— thank you fer bein' a pertend-Auntie," she said brokenly.

Rosamond made a swift spring, and caught the mournful little figure in her arms.

"You needn't go, Allie!" she said. "You send that Homes-for-the-Homeless woman to me when she comes. I'm going to have you live with me. I'll be your Auntie!"

"*Oh!*" said Allie. She gave a long, quivering sigh of delight, and held convulsively to Rosamond for a minute. "Oh, pertends *do* come true, if you only think they will!"

"Why, of course they do!" Rosamond said.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE KNIGHTLY LOVER

"BUT why not?" Rosamond inquired of John Squire some days later. It seemed to her that she had to make that remark to him oftener than to anybody else she had ever met. "She says she'll do all my scrubbing 'awful particular,' and she's lots fonder of me than — than lots of people are."

"Are you going to have her scrub?" he inquired. For no visible reason, her last remark had made the even, English-looking colour in his cheeks climb up past his black side-whiskers, till it reached the shelter of his equally black hair.

"He's all red and white and black, like a court card," thought Rosamond, as she answered him with that firmness which she kept for him and Cousin George alone:

"I shall not make her scrub, nor shall I beat her, nor make her use a communal towel and toothbrush, as I understand her late owner did."

Mr. Squire, who was sitting on the lower step of the porch, looked aghast.

"Good Heavens!" he said, like the man in Ibsen, "I didn't know people *did* such things!"

"They *do*," said Rosamond: to them both the toothbrush episode seemed much more tragic than the beatings. And it had probably seemed so to Allie, for she had mentioned it with much more feeling than she gave to a casual reference to "strappin's."

"Then what on earth do you want the child for?" he asked perplexedly, looking up at Rosamond. She was going to be firm again, but she suddenly found out that he had grey eyes, not black, as he should have had to be properly consistent: large steady dark-grey eyes, so heavily black-lashed that you might know him for years, and never discover the truth about their colour except by an accident, as Rosamond had done.

There is no reason why the discovery that a man has grey eyes instead of black should make you sorry for him; but for some reason it did have that effect on Rosamond, and she answered him as if he were almost human instead of the living Don't she usually regarded him. Anyway, she had lured him hither herself, to coax out of him a grass mat for the porch, and a signed belief that she was staid and responsible enough to be trusted with the Homeless. So she decided to throw herself on his mercy — just a little throw to begin with, because she wasn't sure how much mercy he might have.

"You see," she explained softly, "Alicia Lauretta's the Realisation of a Dream. And I'm one, for her, too. And when it fits in as well as all that,

you can see for yourself it's too good an opportunity to be lost!"

The Squire looked at her as if he wished she would translate.

"I am going to tell you what I didn't tell you before I bought your bungalow," she went on. "I didn't come down here for peace or fresh air or fishing, or even to rescue small girls from Simmons brutes. I came here to realise dreams."

"Realise your dreams?" said the Squire quite simply — "But nobody ever does that, you know."

"Yes," she said, "they do. Everybody could if they only thought so. Because most people's pet dreams are only things they're afraid to do because people would laugh, or because it mightn't make money for them, or because some one thinks they shouldn't — or some such silly reason. *There's no reason why not*, nearly all the time! I wanted all my life to be alone in a house that belonged to just me — and I have it. Cousin George didn't think I ought to, and you didn't either, but — here I am. I wanted a lot of other things, too. I have them written down. Want to hear them?"

Her eyes danced. She was sure the Squire would look pained. But he sat as gravely at attention as a big dog.

"Please," he said.

She pulled out of her dress, where she had pinned it, the list Cousin Jenny had been so shocked over.

She had a vague hope that the Squire, too, would be shocked satisfactorily. But when she had read it over to him, with one or two discreet omissions, he merely smiled at her. It was a brand-new smile which he had never used before — as if she were a dear little confident child proudly displaying a fine baking of mud-pies.

"They *aren't* mud-pies!" she said before she thought.

"Why, of course they're not!" said the Squire, still smiling exactly as if they were. "Well, which dream does your Little Orphan Allie realise — is she the Livonian Bloodhound or the Knightly Lover?"

"Neither," said Rosamond. "She's the Somebody-to-Look-up-to-Me. She does, really."

"And have they really given her to you?" he asked.

"On probation," said Rosamond a little ruefully. "They wouldn't, if Mrs. Simmons' 'husky nigger' hadn't been brought, and no place handy to stow poor little Alicia Lauretta. But if you'll just sign an affidavit that I'm a thoroughly trustworthy person — ah, please, good, kind, nice Mr. Squire, do! — I'll get her to keep. I have a certificate from my East Warren clergyman now, all about how good I am, but they have to have two signatures. *Please*, now — you know perfectly well that I don't smoke, drink or gamble, and that I'll be very good to Allie!"

"Why don't you ask your cousin?" inquired Mr.

Squire, rather unfairly. He had been treated to one or two descriptions of Cousin George — usually delineated as his own soul-mate.

"He wouldn't," said Rosamond matter-of-factly. "He wants me to go and study stenography. But I can take care of Allie perfectly well. I get five hundred a year for Uncle Alvin's house in East Warren, and I own this one and a thousand dollars I didn't pay you for it. Besides; there's going to be the Peaceful Exercise of My Profession, soon as summer comes."

The Squire didn't go into that, just then. Possibly he'd learned that it wasn't any use, though when it came to tenacity there were times, Rosamond knew, when he could give her bloodhound-elect points.

"May I see the little girl?" he asked.

"You may," said Rosamond. "I'll get her. I have to untie her from the cellar, where she's been scrubbing out the coalbin, you know."

"Unchain, don't you mean?" retorted the Squire swiftly. "As a matter of fact my principal fear is that you will spoil the child."

Rosamond went to the doorway. "Alicia dear!" she called.

"Yes, dear Auntie!" replied an amiable little voice; and Alicia Lauretta emerged.

It was distinctly Alicia Lauretta, not Simmons' Allie. Four days of Rosamond's sway over an adoringly imitative little mind had worked wonders. Allie

was dressed in the white frock of her dreams. It might have been ready-made, but it was undeniably the kind the *St. Nicholas* little girl had sported. She was tied about with a pink sash, and — a flight to which her wildest fancies had never carried her — there was a pink fillet ending in a dashing bow, bound round her curls. She was clean and unterrified, and the stray-kitten look was fading from her little pointed face, which was plumper and pinker than it had been. In her hand she held elegantly the fairy-book she had been reading. Rosamond had dressed her carefully for the part before she had sent for Mr. Squire, and the effect on him seemed good.

"Mr. Squire wants to talk to you, dear," Rosamond explained. Alicia dropped a very creditable curtsy, considering that she'd only had one or two lessons.

"How do you do, Mr. Squire," she said as sweetly as any of his friends' little girls would have spoken.

The Squire may have had, for the moment, the sensation of assisting at a play; but he rose gallantly to the occasion.

"How do you do, Allie?" he said, "and how is everything going with you?"

Alicia — late Allie — nestled confidingly down on the step by him. Up to this time he had been somebody to be watched from afar with awe; but he seemed to be Rosamond's friend, and any one who was that was to be adopted and trusted implicitly.

"Beautiful!" she said. "You know, if you want your Pertend badly, you get it! — This is mine. Oh, it's *lovely!*"

"And do you do anything except pretend?" inquired the Squire, with a glance in Rosamond's direction as if he meant her too.

"It's *real* now," Alicia explained patiently. "I help Auntie with the work, but it's nice, clean work. Nothing ever smells horrid. And we're going to have old Annie for the washing every Monday, an' she scrubs an' cleans windows Fridays. An' I learn manners a lot, an' pianner-playin', too. Pi-an-o, I mean."

"And do you like it?" asked the Squire.

"Why, of course!" said Alicia grandly. "It's the sort of place I always felt like I belonged to!"

"I'm teaching her to sew, too," added Rosamond quietly. "And I find she knew nothing at all about cooking. The Simmons woman did everything the hardest, sloppiest, worst way. Is there anything more you'd like to ask her?"

"Why, not much more," said the Squire. He put a kind arm around the child. "You're happy, then," he said. "But do you do everything Miss Rosamond tells you to, as a good little girl should?"

Alicia looked at him in superb surprise.

"Wouldn't you?" she said.

The Squire laughed. "Upon my word, I seem to, my dear!" he answered, and rose, still with his arm

around the child. "You win, Miss Gilbert," he said. "I'll sign whatever it is."

"You may go back now, dear," said Rosamond, and Allie disappeared contentedly with her fairy-book. "It's really curious," she went on, "how she *does* fit into well-bred ways. She seems to love being well brought up."

The Squire smiled.

"She *is* being brought up well," said Rosamond hotly, "and you know it."

"She is in very good hands. I will sign the papers," said the Squire with a return to his copy-book manners.

"Oh, goody!" said Rosamond with one of her swift changes of manner. "And for a reward you can take us out in your car some day soon to find my Livonian bloodhound!"

"Thank you," said the Squire doubtfully as he went.

"He acts almost as if his wife would object," mused Rosamond. Then she remembered: he hadn't a wife, because wives have to sign conveyances of property, and his hadn't. "Then there isn't any her," Rosamond thought. "Maybe he broke his heart in his first youth because his sweetheart died — or perhaps she wouldn't marry side-whiskers. I wonder why on earth he wears them. He can't be much more than forty — which is old enough, to be sure, but not old enough to do that to your face." Her soft brown

eyes focused dreamily on the lake below her. "I wonder — I wonder why it wouldn't be kind to him to get him not to wear them. Perhaps she'd take him back. I suppose she's quite an old person in a cap by now. But she may be able to love still. . . ." She continued to look at the lake. "I wonder," she said, "oh, I wonder when I shall see my Knightly Lover?"

But it is not useful, though it may be pleasant, to dream of Knightly Lovers, when you should be planning a fortune-telling booth which can only cost forty dollars. Rosamond brought her eyes down from the sunset, and began to plan ways and means, for summer was coming in.

"Alicia!" she called. "Do you know of a good carpenter I could get?"

"For the fortune-telling place?" Alicia called back from inside. She had heard all about it, and was as thrilled by the idea as Rosamond herself. "Oh, yes, Bill Curley is good an' quite cheap. Auntie, can't I learn to tell fortunes too, byn' by?"

"I don't see why not," said Rosamond, coming in. "Dear me, it's nearly time to get supper."

"*I've* got supper," said Alicia proudly.

Rosamond's heart sank. It was all very well for Alicia to be willing to scrub, and to regard the hardest work as mere commonplaces to be tossed off for her divinity. But Mrs. Simmons' ideas of cooking and Rosamond's differed widely. She ran into

the dining-room, only to be greeted by a cloud of smoke.

"I've fried some potatoes raw," said Alicia gleefully. She was carefully shrouded in a long lavender gingham apron Rosamond had made her. "And the beefsteak's all fried, too. Ain't it nice?"

Rosamond looked in holy horror at the little round table, set carefully in just the way she had showed Alicia. On it sizzled a platter of beefsteak, fried to leather. On a soup-plate beside it were heaped enough half-charred, half-raw potatoes for the numerous Simmons family. There were also hunks of bread, and crowning effect, the butter had been put on in its wooden dish, still modestly half-draped in the paper it had worn from the dairy.

Rosamond opened all the windows with six swift bangs, which relieved her feelings a little. Then she turned to Allie, who was looking at her forlornly.

"Didn't I do it right?" asked Allie. "Ain't it a meal a well-born person would have?"

Suddenly the whole thing, instead of being irritating, struck Rosamond as being funny. It *was* so far from a well-born person's meal!

"No, dear," she said, "I won't deceive you. This meal is *not* what a well-born person would cook, unless she was hunting for dyspepsia."

Allie cheered up a little. It couldn't be so bad if Rosamond smiled.

"It was lovely of you to surprise me," went on

Rosamond. "But you see, dear — well, it's the way Mrs. Simmons cooks things, isn't it? And she and I have different tastes. I don't like things *all* fried."

"It saves washin'," explained Allie earnestly. "You kin use the same frying-pan much's a week, sometimes."

"Good *gracious!*" said Rosamond weakly, commencing to eat bread and milk and planning an immediate lecture on domestic hygiene.

"You see, dear," she began again, looking across the table at her earnest-eyed family eating its steak, "it isn't nice to use things more than once without washing. There's more to being well-bred than nice clothes. You have to speak correctly, and be courteous, and keep everything very clean —"

Allie continued to absorb her words of wisdom with reverence; but Rosamond caught herself in mid-air.

"Goodness!" she thought, "instructing the young *is* insidious! I'm beginning to lay down the law like Grand-Uncle Alvin and Cousin Jenny, just because Allie's little and I'm big! Honey," she said aloud, "never mind. We'll pick things up as we go along. You run out now and play with somebody, and be happy."

"But I don't want to," said Allie. "Please, Auntie, let me stay with you." Her voice lowered a little, and she looked down. "I — I feel as if it was all pertend, sometimes, yet," she explained shame-

facedly. "I'd rather be where I can see you all the time, a while yet — 'f you don't mind."

"Of course I don't," said Rosamond, though a small girl who seemed to actually like being improved was nearly beyond her comprehension. "Come on, dear, let's go out on the porch with our wraps, and watch to see if a Knightly Lover doesn't ride by."

So they went out on the porch and sat down to watch the lake. It really wasn't necessary for anyone to ride by to add to the beauty of the night. Rosamond folded her hands and fell to dreaming of the fortune-telling booth. The heaven-sent thought had just come to her that a nice, durable striped tent would be much more suitable to her profession and also to her pocket than the wooden place she had intended. She watched the moonlit water absently as she arranged details. An occasional canoe slipped silently up or down. Some of the people in them were singing.

One canoe she watched with more interest than the others, because it was prettier. It was white, and it glided along the water like a low-skimming moth. It went up the lake, out of sight, then came back into sight again, returning. Then it neared the shore. She could see the man who sat in it.

"He looks like Lohengrin or Galahad or something!" said Rosamond under her breath. She meant Galahad, probably — at least, none of the plump Teutonic gentlemen who have ever sailed across an

opera-stage behind a practicable swan have ever looked as beautiful as the man in the white canoe. He was in flannels, and the moonlight made him seem silvered all over. It gleamed on his fair, curly-crested head, and on his upraised profile — a clear and regular young profile of the Keats-Le Gallienne variety.

Rosamond watched breathlessly. He was like something out of a play. Yes, he was coming closer still. Close — and he must be tying his boat at the landing below, for she heard a little grating and a bump.

"Oh, is he comin' here?" whispered Allie.

"Hush!" said Rosamond, springing to her feet, and leaning forward in the shelter of a pillar.

They could hear his footsteps, coming up the path.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TURBINE ENGINE AND THE SQUIRE

BUT the steps went by, for the owner of the white canoe, embodied dream though he may have seemed to Rosamond, was thinking of far more earthly things than being the hero of anybody's dreams at all. And Rosamond sank back on the porch with a sigh, and turned her mind to the evolving of portières for the living-room.

For the man in the white canoe wanted to talk to Mr. Squire on business. He was a gallant young figure as he strode on along the path in his white flannels. His name was Richard Jerrold, and in his pocket, slightly sticking out, were large rolls of plans.

John Squire, waiting on the porch for him, was a rather different person than he seemed to Rosamond. The difference was mainly in the direction of businesslikeness. He did not seem tenderly amused at Richard Jerrold, nor did he offer to throw in anything at any stage of the proceedings.

"You are the Mr. Jerrold who mailed me an introduction from a friend of mine?" said he, looking very big and capitalistic.

Jerrold smiled engagingly.

"The very same," said he. "Our mutual friend

told me that he thought you might be interested in some ideas of mine, and I came around to see if you were."

Mr. Squire offered him a cigar.

"I can't tell yet, you know," he said. "At least, not till I've heard about it, or them."

Richard Jerrold said "no, thank you," to the cigar, and produced cigarettes instead. So Mr. Squire lighted the cigar himself, and they smoked in sociable silence for a little while, and let the night go on being beautiful without worrying to mention it, as they would have felt to be necessary if they had been women.

"Good old moon," said Mr. Jerrold presently, motioning toward it with his second cigarette.

"Excellent," replied Mr. Squire. "As far as that idea goes I agree with you fully."

Jerrold grinned. He began to like Mr. Squire, large and capitalistic as he seemed.

"We-ll," he said, "that *wasn't*, as a matter of fact, the sort of thing I wanted to call to your attention. But it seemed a shame to spring it on you without any — er — preliminaries about moons and so on."

"Good idea," said Mr. Squire. "Well, having disposed of the moon, let's get down to facts."

Mr. Jerrold threw away his cigarette, and got up, so that he could get the large roll of plans out of his trousers pocket more easily.

"Here are the facts," he said.

He handed them across to Mr. Squire without further remarks. That gentleman studied them in silence for some minutes, while Jerrold held himself rather nervously still.

"What do you think of them?" he asked at length, as Mr. Squire continued to say nothing — a disconcerting habit of things, because it left the next move, always, up to the other party to the argument.

"I don't believe I entirely understand them," answered Squire. "They are blue-prints of some sort of engine, aren't they?"

Mr. Jerrold came over and sat down close to him, where he could reach out and touch the blue-prints of his heart, which Squire was tapping as carelessly as if they were an evening paper.

"They are plans for an entirely new sort of turbine engine," he said. "My professors at the technical school seemed to think very well of it. If it goes through it will revolutionise —"

Squire interrupted him with a technical question or two that showed he did understand exceedingly well what the engine was about.

Jerrold answered as swiftly, and they discussed mechanical points for some little time.

"And, as I understand, you would like me to help you finance the thing — is that it?" inquired Mr. Squire. "Can you do anything at all in that line yourself?"

Jerrold smiled.

"Usually inventors can't," he said. "But it happened that I did expect a relative of mine to help me with it. She had practically promised to do so. But — being a woman — she changed her mind about it. And before she could change it back she died."

"I am sorry she died," said Mr. Squire thoughtfully, still tapping the plans.

Jerrold's heart sank a little, for this did not sound promising at all.

"What do you think of them?" he said bluntly.

"So far as I can judge they are plans which have a fair chance of success," he said. "And, as Mr. Miller has doubtless told you, I am interested in such things. But — they are nevertheless a gamble. I should be glad to help you if you had yourself an equal interest in the matter. That would assure me of your own good faith, and also that it wasn't as wild-cat as my going it alone would make it. But as matters stand now, I don't believe I would be justified in backing it, lone hand fashion."

"That is, if I could finance half you would finance the other half?" asked Mr. Jerrold eagerly.

"I don't say that," answered the Squire cautiously. "I only say that I might think more favourably of doing so. Can you back it yourself to any extent?"

"No," said Jerrold ruefully. "I can't. I'm only just out of Yale last June, and my only available assets are a middle-sized hotel this relative left me near here, down in the town. It's called the Mam-

moth — I suppose because it is much smaller than the hotels on either side of it. And it's rather run-down. I can't dispose of it, because it hasn't a good clientage, what they call a following, I find. I am trying to sell it, but it seems impossible at this stage of the game."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Squire. "Hotels of that type are rather hard to dispose of. However, that may turn out differently. Are you staying here?"

Mr. Jerrold nodded. He was bunking in the hotel, he said, and having rather a good time, except that it had been chilly at first.

"Who lives in that little bungalow at the side of the path as you come up from the water?" he inquired. "If by any wild chance I *should* rent the Mammoth — may the heavens be its bed! — it looks like about what I'd like to live in."

Mr. Squire looked, long and intently, at the gentle, clear-cut and guileless face of young Mr. Jerrold. His fair head was tipped back a little, the better to make rings out of smoke. He looked most uncommonly young and picturesque. Men are not supposed to care whether they are handsome or not, but — even the most sensible of men have been known to underrate their own and overrate other men's attractions, under certain circumstances. Mr. Squire thought that Richard Jerrold was exceedingly good-looking and attractive and light-hearted.

"That bungalow's sold," he said shortly, "to a

single lady who lives in it. A very estimable person."

"She didn't look estimable," said Mr. Jerrold absently. "She looked slim and young and a darling. Or perhaps that was her niece or something."

Evidently he had seen something besides the lines of the bungalow. Mr. Squire bit the end of his brown, prosperous cigar so hard that he bit it off. But he had refused to finance Jerrold's scheme, and what could he do? And Jerrold continued to ask questions about the inmates of the bungalow. The dress he had seen was pink. He liked pink. And the Squire had a strong feeling that Rosamond Gilbert was going to express a preference for white flannels and fair curly hair brushed back straight. He didn't feel that she would be wise in doing so, but what could you do with a headstrong girl like that? He switched the conversation desperately back to the turbine engine which was going to revolutionise things. He even began to think wildly of financing it on condition that Mr. Jerrold took it and left for the far, far Orient. But somehow Jerrold seemed to want to talk about the bungalow.

When he finally rose to go the Squire found himself feeling so grateful that when Jerrold asked him to walk down to the dock with him he went joyfully. And it never struck him till too late just *why* his society was desired.

"Do you suppose," Jerrold inquired, stopping short on the path when they were level with Ros-

amond's dwelling, "that the good lady over there would let us look over the premises? I certainly do like the looks of that little house."

It was an attractive little house. Just at present Mr. Squire wished that he hadn't lavished such care on the building of it.

"She's not very keen about strangers," said he.

"Let's try!" said Jerrold buoyantly; and led the way across the grass.

Mr. Squire felt, as he made the introduction of Rosamond and Richard Jerrold, as if they two were figures that belonged in the same pageant; and as if he, quiet and big and dark and slow-spoken, were something that belonged somewhere else altogether — something that belonged gravely discussing things off with older people, while these two laughed and fitted together in the spring moonlight. Rosamond and this college boy with his ridiculous roll of plans and his hair that the moonlight caught so engagingly, did not seem to have any need of *him*.

It seemed forever before Jerrold wanted to go. Mr. Squire got up, himself, as a gentle hint, and had to stand quite a little while before the hint was taken.

"What a perfect joy that girl is!" said Jerrold. "You couldn't have the blues with her around, under any circumstances known to the mind of man."

"No," said Mr. Squire. He did not add anything more at all.

Jerrold got into the canoe and paddled off, and Mr. Squire watched him go with a dark premonition that this was only the beginning of things. By way of turning the knife in the wound he stopped again on his way back, where Rosamond was still standing, leaning against one of the supports of the bungalow porch, looking far off in the distance. For once her face was serious.

"Isn't it lovely, just being alive, a night like this?" she said gravely to him as he returned.

"Is it?" he said. His face softened a little as he looked at her. It seemed to him a blessed thing that she could enjoy being alive, after all, even if he couldn't with Richard Jerrold in the foreground.

"Don't you think so?" she asked.

He smiled. "Well, being happier comes easier to some people than it does to others," he explained. A very clever thought had struck him. "I wish you'd show me how to enjoy things," he suggested.

She laughed.

"With everything you have?" she said. "It's too late, dear sir! I'm going to start with mild cases and work up, not with people who have heaps of money and heaps of houses and land and servants, and can't enjoy them."

"If that's the case," said the Squire quietly, "perhaps I'd better go home."

Rosamond coloured. She was afraid she'd hurt

his feelings, and if there was one thing she hated more than another, it was doing that to anybody.

"I'm sorry!" said she like a child. "Won't you please not go? And I'll get you something nice to eat." Rosamond had great faith in giving men things to eat when you wanted to take their minds. It had worked beautifully with even Grand-Uncle Alvin in times gone. So she slipped inside and brought out, in what seemed a very short time, some sandwiches with unexpected fillings inside, and some hot chocolate — for it was getting a little chilly on the verandah. "Isn't it lovely to think there's nobody to tell us we must go in because it's cold?" she said gleefully, sitting down by Mr. Squire and pouring him a big cupful of chocolate.

Mr. Squire laughed. "How did you know that anybody ever told me to go in?" he inquired, helping himself to the sandwiches with a certain lifting of spirits.

"I didn't," she answered. "Did they?" The idea of anybody telling her large landlord to go or come anywhere at all was one which struck her as curious. "I was being self-centred and thinking about just me. People always do tell you to go in, you know, if *they* are chilly. And of course they get chilly long before you do."

"Naturally," said he. He was looking quite happy again. "I don't know, though, for I never did get cold."

"Then he isn't going to advise me to have a wrap," thought Rosamond, who always kept one hand on her independence, as if it was a pocketbook, when the Squire was about.

They stopped talking, gradually, but it was not a trying silence. That was one nice thing about the Squire, Rosamond thought, you could be perfectly comfortable when he was about, as if he were a blanket, or a couch, or something else soothing and useful. That is, if he wasn't trying to reconstruct you. And to-night he wasn't, not at all.

"Oh, you *are* nice!" she said impulsively, laying one warm hand on his wrist.

Rosamond had very live little hands. They were no more impersonal than she was. Indeed, they could almost talk to you, all by themselves. They were saying to the Squire now, just as Rosamond had, how nice he was, and how kind it was of him not to be improving her for the moment, and how lovely things were generally. So he sat very still and let her still hand talk into his wrist. It was with a distinct shock that he found that she was taking it away.

"It's more than eleven," said Rosamond demurely. "Don't you know that you ought to have told me it was time all good little girls were in bed?"

"Why — yes," he answered, rising to his feet. "I suppose I ought."

"Well, don't," she counselled. "Let me say in-

stead, that it's time even the best of landlords ought to go home!"

So he went.

Rosamond felt tired, and she slipped up to bed almost right away. It was not till she had her head on the pillow and was nearly asleep that it suddenly occurred to her that her knight from the white canoe had come to her after all, and spent nearly three-quarters of an hour with her. She had been so busy talking to the Squire afterwards that it had almost slipped her mind. And yet — why, she hadn't said much to the Squire after all. It must have been making those sandwiches in such swift time that had taken her mind. Sometimes days and evenings seem as if a great deal had happened in them when nothing has really.

"But the white canoe man said mightn't he come back," she reminded herself. "And I think he'll be back soon." So she went as placidly to sleep as ever. "I wonder how soon," was her last waking thought, "before I'll be in love with him?"

CHAPTER SIX

THE WHITE KNIGHT

HE did come back, the very next night. Rosamond hadn't dared to hope for it so soon, though she *had* dressed for the occasion, rather. But she told herself that the most Knightly of prospective Lovers wouldn't be apt to come back the very next evening, and spend the time from six to eight playing on the piano. She played straight through all the hardest pieces she could find in the book she disliked the most, and almost forgot to listen through the music for steps coming up the path. After the clock struck eight she decided that he wouldn't come, anyway, and — which was not at all the way she should have done, she remembered too late — turned on the porch light and curled into the swing-seat and began to draw plans for a sun-dial with the most intense interest. She didn't really know where to get one, but she knew exactly where she wanted it put. As for the buying of the actual dial, the Squire would doubtless be able to manage it for her.

So when the slim white figure of Mr. Jerrold swung irresponsibly up the path she had almost forgotten who he was. But she pushed her plans into a heap

on the seat behind her, and came forward with her hand out.

"I'm so glad you came back!" she said. "I was so afraid you wouldn't."

"I was afraid I wouldn't, too," said Mr. Jerrold promptly. "I was afraid this house, and you, were something I thought I saw, something that wasn't real at all."

"I'm real," answered Rosamond, pulling a chair out for him, "but sometimes I'm not sure yet whether the house is or not. And I live here all alone except for a chaperone, and there isn't anybody to tell me what to do!"

Mr. Jerrold sat down and smiled sunnily at her. He was just as young as she was, it occurred to Rosamond, and he looked as if he was going to know how to play.

"In me," he said, "you behold a victim of cruel and undeserved misfortunes."

"I'm exceedingly sorry," said Rosamond with appropriate sympathy. Then they both burst out laughing.

"No, but really, it's true," he said. "And the sad part of it is, to me, that I live all alone without even a chaperone, even the very smallest kind of a one, and there isn't a soul to tell me what to do!"

"And you mind that?" she asked. Rosamond could not imagine such a thing happening. Then she wondered. Did this young man, this White Knight

with such charmingly casual manners, really need advice? It made him a little less like a hero, needing to be helped — which was a horrid feeling, and one Rosamond promptly sat on. And then, it was really none of her business. He might think she was interfering.

She had just opened her mouth to change the subject, when her eyes caught a glimpse of something moving on the path below her. A small green caterpillar, doubtless on its way home to a belated bed, crawled deliberately across the gravel. It did not say "Why not?" because it couldn't, but it might have, just as well. . . . After all, you should always help anybody you can, especially people with such blue eyes.

"Could — could I tell you what to do, I wonder?" she said diffidently. "It isn't as silly as it seems, you know. I'm almost a professional at it, or I'm going to be soon."

"At giving advice?" he asked lightly. "Good advice? Mr. Squire said you were a very estimable lady, but I didn't really believe it till now."

But Rosamond refused to be anything but serious. "Yes," she said, "that is, not yet — really. But I expect to go into it as a business shortly. Only I don't call it giving advice. I call it realising dreams. But I am going to tell fortunes, too, cards, hands or tea-grounds. The tea would have to be extra, don't you think? — And if you really do need

help I should be very glad indeed to give it to you."

"If you're really in earnest," he said, "I would like to tell you about things. Only it seems an imposition to tell a girl you've almost just met —"

"Imposition!" cried Rosamond warmly. "Why, it's what I'm for!"

Mr. Jerrold shook his head.

"I don't believe advice would help me!"

The truth was, Rosamond, in the moonlight, looked too pretty to give any impression of usefulness. But she leaned forward eagerly.

"Ah, tell me!" she said.

When Rosamond's bright, dark eyes focused themselves on somebody, and her swift, soft voice said "*Tell* me!" most people had an urgent desire to tell, and this young man wasn't an exception to the rule. He settled himself in an unmistakably narrative fashion in his chair, and began to do as she asked.

"You know my name, to begin with," he said. "And I told you last night that I was Yale, last year's class."

("That would make him twenty-three, or four at the most," calculated Rosamond swiftly.)

"I had a grand-aunt," was the next piece of information he offered. It didn't seem to have much connection with Yale, last year's class, but Rosamond waited patiently.

"Did you?" she said interestedly. "Mine was a grand-uncle, but the principle's the same."

Mr. Jerrold looked sympathetic.

"Well, I hope not," said he, "because mine did me the meanest turn anybody's aunt ever did. She put me through college and technical school and a P. G. course —"

"I've heard of crueller treatment," commented Rosamond to the stars.

"Wait," commanded Jerrold sternly. "And then she died. And she'd promised to leave me money for my invention."

"Forgive me for seeming to interrupt," said Rosamond, "but you've forgotten to mention your invention before."

"Oh, did I?" said Jerrold absently. Then he sat forward in his chair and began to make gestures. "It's going to revolutionise everything," he said, "everything. It's a turbine engine, *not* a rotary —"

"I'm sorry," interrupted Rosamond politely, "but I don't believe any of that would tell me much. It's one of those labour-saving things, isn't it, to make one labourer grow where five grew before? And the other four labourers starve to death, and you make quite a little money, and the factories make lots? Grand-Uncle Alvin used to tell me about them. He said they were iniquitous. I think that was the word. And is it really going to be a success?"

All in a minute the White Knight's boyish face grew more mature.

"Yes, it is!" he said passionately. "I'm as sure

of that as that the sun rose up in the east this morning. So were my professors. The thing is a practical certainty. It is one of the necessities of the age."

"Then why don't you patent it?" asked Rosamond innocently. "All you have to do is to send a dollar to the Patent Office, isn't it?"

Jerrold looked hopeless, and Rosamond realised that she had evidently said the wrong thing.

"You don't understand," he explained, making an obvious effort to be polite to utter ignorance. "It isn't the getting it patented. It's getting the money to push it. Of course I thought Aunt Genevieve would have come across — and instead she died!"

He sat back again in his chair and looked unmistakably wronged.

"Well, I certainly wouldn't want to be any aunt of yours!" said Rosamond with conviction. "All you seem to think they're good for is to do things for you. I thought people were attached to aunts. But you act as if your poor aunt hadn't even a right to die if she wanted to! And likely she did want to," Rosamond added severely, "if you were all the relative she had to love her! You know," she ended with one of her swift transitions, "you have to love people. If you don't you get all mixed up and wrong."

Jerrold looked apologetic.

"I scarcely knew her," he explained, "except to see her once in a very long while. But I really was

sorry she died, though I wouldn't have thought I had any right to stop her, even if I could have. It was apoplexy, and awfully sudden. But her will was what got me. I don't think much of people who say unpleasant things to you in their wills. It's so darn unfair. Why, you can't say a word back. And even if you did they wouldn't hear you."

"It isn't fair," Rosamond conceded sympathetically. Then she smiled a little. "Women like the last word. What did she say?"

"She said," replied Jerrold, nearly choking over the reply, "that most inventors were fools anyway. And that I'd be a fool to go on inventing. And instead of leaving me enough money to push the thing through, as she'd practically promised, she left me a summer hotel down here!"

"Where on earth did she get it?" inquired Rosamond with interest. She shared Aunt Genevieve's ideas about inventors, as most women do, but there was no use hurting young Jerrold's feelings by telling him so.

"Eh? Oh, I don't know," replied Jerrold, dismissing that part of it indifferently. "She owned odd pieces of property all over. She left my sister a candy-store in Terre Haute. Well, there it is, the blamed brute, a second-class hotel named the Mammoth, forty-two bedrooms, all modern improvements: and here am I, walking round the blamed thing trying to figure out what to do with it! Mammoth!

It's a regular elephant on my hands. They named it better than they knew, confound them!"

"Why don't you sell?" asked Rosamond, who inherited, after all, something of a business head from the Grand-Uncle Alvin side of the family. "Sell it and use the money to back your rotary turbine engine."

"No, no! Turbine, *not* rotary!" implored Mr. Jerrold frantically.

"Turbine, not rotary," amended Rosamond placidly. "It's the simplest proposition on earth. I know a very good real-estate dealer, that I bought this bungalow through. You can see for yourself that it's an excellent bungalow."

"Sell it!" said Richard Jerrold pathetically. "I only wish I could! But it hasn't any following. And you can't sell a hotel that hasn't any following, they say, any more than you could a — a church without a steeple."

"What's a Following?" inquired Rosamond. It sounded to her like a very beautiful word, with a romantic sort of sound.

"People," said Richard Jerrold gloomily, "lots of people that have gotten the habit of boarding in a hotel so badly that they wouldn't live anywhere else free."

"Why hasn't it a following?" demanded Rosamond.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mr. Jerrold indifferently.

Things which didn't concern him directly evidently didn't worry him much. "It just hasn't, I guess. So I can't rent it and I can't sell it, and I can't finance my engine, and I don't see any way out. A friend of mine thought I might get Squire to back it for me, but he won't."

Rosamond did not speak for a moment. Her mind was divided between anger at John Squire for his unfeelingness, and a certain unbidden belief way down that it was rather sensible of him to be so unfeeling. For Jerrold had something of the same drawback Rosamond herself possessed; he was so decorative that it was hard to imagine him as useful. However, the Squire's behaviour was neither here nor there. Here was a real chance at dream-realising, and Rosamond felt that she owed it to herself to do well.

"There must be a way out," she said confidently. "Why shouldn't there be? Isn't there *any* chance of selling it?"

"Well, there is one man named Chisum," acknowledged Jerrold, "that wants to buy it. But he's like the rest. He's buying it to run, and he demands a Following, the same way the other brutes do. If it only had one he'd take it like a shot: and then I could push my engine and be a millionaire in a short time. . . . All that engine needs is capital! He'd take it this fall, and pay me cash. But there you are. And I've got to live, too."

"Of course you have!" said Rosamond with conviction. She saw the necessity plainly. This was far too beautiful and attractive and clever a young man to be allowed to fade out of life for a mere lack of Following. And besides, he *was* so like a knight out of a story-book! And the intonations of his voice, even, were so pleasant that she didn't mind when he forgot her and got switched off on his engine.

"Let me think!" she said, holding up one imperious little hand.

So he let her very politely, and she sat back in her swing-seat and looked at the moon and thought very hard for four minutes.

"I know what you must do," she said finally. "It's so simple you'd have thought of it yourself in another minute. Run the Elephant — I mean the Mammoth — yourself! Then at the end of the season you'll have heaps of Following. Then you can sell the Mammoth and the Following (I'm sure that will be mammoth too) to your Chisum man. Then you can take your cash and push your invention and be a millionaire in a short time. Even if you're not you'll have had what you wanted, and you'll be more comfortable with it off your mind, and be able to go on with something else, that will earn you a living."

If there was still a shade of that inevitable feminine distrust of inventions in Rosamond's conclusion, Jerrold did not notice it. He was too much absorbed

in her suggestion. He too sat and thought in silence for some minutes. Then:

"But I don't know how to run a hotel," he said plaintively.

"Did you know how to invent when you started in?" asked Rosamond scornfully.

"No," he acknowledged. "But that's different."

"Not different a bit!" cried Rosamond. "I don't see why on earth a man with enough brains to invent a turbine engine with rotary trimmings hasn't enough brains to run a small red brick hotel. Of course you can — why not?"

She was an embodied Why Not as she sat there with her cloak fallen back; the kind of girl who could make nearly any man think he could do nearly anything.

"By Jove!" said Jerrold, looking into her shining eyes, "I believe I could!"

Rosamond swept that aside, taken for granted.

"Of course," she said, "you mayn't like it. In fact, I don't think you will, for people who keep hotels, what I've seen of them, seem to have a good deal on their minds. But if you just remember, hard, that you're going through the inevitable uncomfortablenesses on the way to what you want most in the world, why, it'll be endurable."

"Endurable?" said Richard Jerrold questioningly. He did not seem to like the word much.

It occurred to Rosamond that, attractive as he was,

he must always have had everything made easy for him hitherto, and that she mustn't let this course of action seem so hard.

"I'd like to do it, if it were me," she said. I should think it would be fun to see all the different kinds of people who would come to the Mammoth."

"Gracious!" he said, "I only wish you could!"

"Well, why couldn't I?" she asked. "But no, I forgot. I have —" she became very serious suddenly —"I have my own work. You see, I have to live, too. But I'll start you running," she offered generously, ignoring the small and unimportant fact that she knew quite as little about the gentle art of hotel-keeping as Jerrold could possible know. But "it's nothing worse than keeping house on a large scale," she reassured herself, "and I can keep house very well. I can show this man how in a week or so!"

Jerrold looked up hopefully at her.

"I believe it can be put through," he said. "At least, I can try. But honestly, Miss Gilbert, if you help me I think you ought to have a percentage. Say ten per cent. for getting the place into running order, and coming over afterwards often enough to see that things are kept straight. That would be only fair, wouldn't it?"

"That would be very nice," said Rosamond sedately. "But I'll tell you what I'd rather you'd do; get me customers for my fortune-telling. You

know I'm going to really do it. I know how to do it very well. I don't see why it shouldn't be made a first-class profession. I'll come down to your hotel every so often, and help you, and then read the people's fortunes. Perhaps you'd let me have a corner in your verandah to do it in."

"Every corner there is!" said he enthusiastically.

"And let me put up a sign in the Mammoth?" she pursued. "It would be a very high-class sign, probably quite arts-and-craftsy looking, in colours to match your — what do they call the front room of a hotel?"

"The foyer," supplied Jerrold sadly.

But though he was still a little mournful, he seemed to have absolute faith that Rosamond could do what she said she could. So they stopped discussing that minor detail, making a living, and began to find out instead which liked Kipling best, and what music and stories and people and places they both knew. When Rosamond thought it over afterwards it seemed surprising to her that Jerrold had accepted her advice and her capability so unquestioningly. But she did not realise that she was one of those fortunate people who can make others believe in them. And indeed the world has gotten into the habit nowadays of thinking that girls can do almost anything. For all Richard Jerrold knew Rosamond might have been an efficiency expertess who specialised on the teaching of strange young men hotel-running.

So at about eleven it occurred to them to arrange that Rosamond should come down and look the Mammoth over at three next day.

Jerrold went down the path singing cheerfully, turned at the dock to wave her a gay good-bye; and then the white canoe slid out once more into the moonlight, and dipped its slim, noiseless way along till it vanished from Rosamond's range of vision.

"Just as if he were on his way to a Quest," she mused. And — why, it *was* like a Quest, his setting forth to realise his turbine thing that his voice softened over so lovingly.

She fell to dreaming of how his voice would learn to soften that way over — perhaps — her name, one day.

"If he has all that capability for loving a miserable engine that can't be a bit responsive. . . ."

Rosamond was not specially vain, but she knew perfectly well that in her capacity as a human girl she was much more attractive than any turbine that ever rotated.

But as she planned and dreamed it suddenly dawned on her that it might be as well to have some idea of hotel-running by eleven next day.

She shrugged her shoulders. It was sad to come down to large, concrete realities.

"I suppose I'll have to call up the Squire!" she said.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE QUEST OF THE BLOODHOUND

BEFORE she went to the telephone she tried to arrange her ideas in some sort of a neat order. She had stayed at a hotel herself once. There were chambermaids and people that cooked, and people to wait at table, and to run errands, and a clerk. There must be books to be kept. Well, a man could manage that end of it. Book-keeping, Rosamond inferred, came to men by nature. If you knew enough about mathematics to make engines, why not enough to keep track of what your inmates paid you? Richard Jerrold could surely do that part himself. Rosamond remembered hearing Grand-Uncle Alvin remark grimly that a man did well to do his own book-keeping.

It seemed tragic, the thought of Richard Jerrold's free blue eyes and strong brown hands attending to such items as "Mrs. Jones: one week's board twenty dollars —" but then, the Quest! She remembered the place in Malory where Sir Gareth of Orkney washed dishes steadily for six months, and nobody but his lady-love considered him a bit the less romantic: and

she only pretended not to like it, so he wouldn't come to the point too soon.

Well, never mind *that*. But Richard Jerrold couldn't run all the other things alone, even with Rosamond to help him.

"I'll have to get him a housekeeper," she remembered, "one who'll be honest, and not steal, but have a feudal devotion to him."

But one couldn't very well advertise — could one? —"Wanted, housekeeper with feudal devotion?"

The words brought something to Rosamond's mind with a jerk — Martha! There was feudal devotion for you, if you like: only fearfully misdirected, lavished on the Squire, who had everything on earth without it. Yet perhaps one could borrow Martha for a while. It would only be fair, she calculated, after having had to keep her whether she wanted to or not. And probably Martha knew somebody of her own kind, whose affections hadn't already been won.

Rosamond sprang up and ran in to call up the Squire. She had a half-idea that he would be placidly in bed by an hour like eleven-thirty, but he wasn't. He was on the verandah, somebody's respectful voice said, and they would call him.

"You don't mean to say you were enjoying the moonlight?" she demanded irrepressibly when they finally did get him on the wire.

"Yes," Mr. Squire's voice acknowledged, "I was. Don't you think I enjoy even moonlight?"

"Well, it seemed like a rather frivolous pleasure for my idea of you," she admitted. "You and the enjoyment of moonlight don't exactly dovetail. I could think of you as enjoying a fine July sun in the morning, perhaps. But it really is awfully good moonlight, and I'm glad you like it. And I hope it has softened your landlordly heart, because I want something. Please, good, kind Mr. Squire, will you take me out in your big shiny machine to-morrow morning? You can bring Martha along to chaperone you, and I'll take Alicia Lauretta if you like. I guess I will anyway. I think it is time I went on the track of my Livonian bloodhound. I feel as if I couldn't get on without him a minute longer. So can you have your car ready about nine?"

Even Squires turn occasionally.

"Suppose I can't?" the deep voice at the other end of the line inquired coolly.

"Then you'll miss a very enjoyable morning in my society," said Rosamond with equal coolness, though she felt very much chilled for the moment, "and I shall have to walk. And I shall return weary and footsore and die on your doorstep, and the coroner's inquest will be lots more trouble than it would have been to tell them to get your car ready. I don't know but I'll have Alicia Lauretta and the

bloodhound die too. And you could never sell the bungalow again if all three of us haunted it!"

Rosamond's voice was flippant, but her eyes were full of tears. She had taken it for granted, somehow, that the Squire would continue to oppose all her harmless amusements, but equally to be ready to do exactly as she wanted him to as regards accommodating her otherwise.

"I couldn't sell the bungalow anyway," he was explaining at the other end of the wire. "You see, it belongs to you — something you never seem to remember. It would go to your heirs and assigns."

"What a dreadful disposition he has!" thought Rosamond, and was about to hang up, when a final impertinence occurred to her. "Nine, did you say? Thank you!" she called, and put the receiver back in its place with a click.

Halfway up the stairs she was arrested by the telephone bell, ringing again. She went down to it, drawn by that tyranny which makes people feel that they have to answer telephones, no matter how much they don't want to.

"He'll tell me he had to have the car himself, instead of letting the thing tactfully alone!" she said petulantly. "Hello!"

"I only called up again to say that you are very welcome to the car if you care for it," said the Squire unexpectedly across the wire.

"Oh, the old dear!" Rosamond burst out in a

voice that she forgot must carry over the phone. "Thank you! And I want you too, please. I have the utmost confidence in your taste in bloodhounds, especially Livonian ones. I'm sure the people who own them will cheat me if you aren't along. Please?"

"Why, certainly," the Squire answered; and his voice sounded as if he was very pleased indeed to be invited out in his own car.

So Rosamond went to bed and to sleep. The ride, where she would have the Squire close and therefore rather more at her mercy, would be the best place to break to him her need of Martha for some afternoons, and Martha's duplicate indefinitely.

She and Allie were up early next morning, and had their house tidied, their breakfast eaten, the clearing-up done, and their most motor-looking clothes on by nine. And promptly at nine the Squire's knock came at the front door.

As frequently happens, there was also one at the back at the very same minute. Rosamond, quivering with the pleasurable expectancy of the long, lovely ride she was going to have, hurried to the front door.

"It's the milkman, back," announced Allie, who seemed to know all tradesmen apart by second sight. "Sh'll I pertend we ain't home?"

Rosamond did not stop, as she should have, to work out the psychology of Allie's suggestion.

"Why, no; he's here to be paid," she said hurriedly. "Here, dear, take this and attend to him."

She handed Allie the first bill she found in her pocket-book and darted back to the front door to open it. Behind it was a big, kind man, and a big shiny motor, and a dazzling spring morning, and a ride down wonderful unknown roads that might be full of anything lovely at all: and how could you stop to deal with milkmen?

The Squire in person was standing and smiling on the porch, looking as strong and cheerful and as much too big for the bungalow as always.

"Oh, it's lovely of you to take us!" said Rosamond radiantly.

Mr. Squire smiled.

"I rather understood you were taking me!" he suggested.

"Don't be horrid," she said. "It's one of the loveliest mornings that ever existed, and I'm happy, and the car's happy — hear how it purrs! — and don't remind me of past crimes!"

"Oh, it's not a crime to let a man go out in his own car," said the Squire provokingly. He seemed in rather good spirits himself, and it struck Rosamond that he was doing something surprisingly near teasing her. It seemed incongruous with his late firmness about refusing to finance Jerrold's engine.

"We'll have to walk over a little way to the machine, you know," he suggested, quite as if no refusals were on his conscience. "Is your orphan going, did you say?"

"Oh, yes, she's quite ready; she only ran back to pay the milkman. Allie! Lock the kitchen door and come, dear."

Allie shut and locked the door audibly and rather abruptly, for they heard a low growl of discontent as if from an invisible milkman. Then she came frisking through the house in all the glory of a new pongee coat and Rosamond's own second-best veil.

"I fixed the milkman," she said breathlessly, dancing in wild circles around the other two, who were making their way to the road where the machine stood waiting.

"We're going to take Martha along, to look after Allie," announced the Squire firmly, in answer to Rosamond's look of surprise as they stopped at his own house. "They can sit together on the back seat. Martha likes children, and she can answer all Allie's questions. That will leave your mind free for the bloodhound, you see."

"That will be very nice," said Rosamond sedately. She was really delighted, for Allie was one too many when you wanted to have a heart-to-heart talk with people. She never interrupted, but you had a fatal feeling that it was because she was taking notes too hard. And Martha was one of those superlatively well-trained servants who could make almost any one into the Perfect Master or Perfect Mistress. So it was with a good deal of pleasure that she greeted the

old woman, who got stiffly into the back seat and took Allie in hand on the spot.

"Little ladies don't stare, Miss Alicia," Rosamond heard her saying. "Sit still, Miss, and look at the pretty scenery going by. And — oh, Miss Alicia, what nails!"

Rosamond thought that if she had been tutored that way at Allie's age she would have jumped out of the car by this time. But apparently her orphan liked it. The pleasure of being Miss-Aliciaed by a family servant of impeccable appearance evidently outweighed the annoyance of being improved, for Rosamond saw her cuddle nearer to Martha, and look perfectly happy. And of course, when the machine began to speed a little, you couldn't hear the back seat from the front, nor the front seat from the back, which is always more or less of a comfort.

"Just what kind of a servant is Martha?" asked Rosamond suddenly from under her American-Beauty-coloured auto veil. "I don't suppose you keep her entirely to loan out to young persons in need of her. But she always seems free to do exactly what you want her to when you want her."

"You want to know her legal, or her real status?" asked Mr. Squire, looking up from the wheel.

"Why, both, of course. Everything," Rosamond answered promptly.

"She began as my nurse," he said a little doubt-

fully. "And I'm afraid she still thinks she is rather, sometimes, dear old thing! She was the housekeeper for a good many years after I was too old for nurses. Now she's a sort of super-housekeeper, with no actual duties but seeing that things go right generally. That's her legal status."

"And her real?" asked Rosamond. There was a certain something in the Squire's manner that suggested feeling. But could such as Squires, oppressors of the young inventor and the prospective fortune-teller — could Squires feel? Rosamond listened hard.

"Real?" he said, "why, I suppose I feel very much as if she were a close relation. She is the nearest I have to a family. We are — in short, we are exceedingly fond of each other."

Fond! It hadn't dawned on Rosamond before that he was a person of whom you could think in terms of fondness. It didn't connect with him in the least, to her mind. Could a large, serious-minded man who seemed to want everybody to do what he told them to have affections? . . . Evidently he was a much more human person than she'd thought before. Also Martha's feudal devotion was amply accounted for. At about that time Rosamond remembered what she wanted.

"Has Martha any relatives who also housekeep?" she asked, with an eye to the main chance.

"I think not," he said. "Were you —" there was a distinct light of approval in his eye —"were you thinking of hiring a housekeeper?"

Rosamond shook her head.

"Not for myself," she said, and the light died down, "but for a — a client."

"We'll see what Martha can do for you," he said encouragingly, evidently hoping that the client part of the story was a myth.

"Then may I borrow Martha this afternoon to help the client a little? You see, she knows such lots of things that the client needs to learn."

"Why, with pleasure, if she is willing," he answered unsuspiciously. "I'll send you both wherever you want to go in the little cart, if you don't mind. It's Martha's favourite way of travel."

"Thank you," murmured Rosamond, a little subduedly for her. It seemed unfair someway, though she couldn't figure to herself just why, to use Mr. Squire's pet servant and the pet servant's pet cart for the ends of the White Knight. She sighed and forgot to talk for a moment or two.

"Tired?" asked her companion solicitously, bending a little to look at her. "We're nearly at the first kennels. There are three along this road, quite close together."

His voice was so kindly and friendly that it sounded as if he were forgiving her in advance for everything she'd done anyway. So she took heart of grace, and

chattered enjoyably sixteen to the dozen, till the kennels appeared.

They were not at all what Rosamond had expected.

"Oh, are those kennels?" she asked blankly.

The Squire nodded.

"Yes, they're the famous Sherwin kennels," he said. "You've heard of them, haven't you?"

Rosamond looked at them.

"I think so," she said vaguely. "But that's just a house, with a long barn at the back! Oh, and they're keeping some of the dogs under the front piazza!"

"Isn't it what you expected?" he asked as he helped her to alight.

Rosamond shook her head. "It's a little informal for my ideas of what kennels should be. I think I imagined long rows of glass houses or something like that, with rows of liveried menials processing up and down with dogs on chains. But I suppose the kennelleer (is that what you call him?) knows best how to do it."

"You see, he has to live somewhere," apologized the Squire, "and living near one's dogs is convenient, you know."

So the procession entered the house and was introduced to the kennelleer. He also was quite disappointing, in that he had no visible marks of his calling, except that he was entirely surrounded by wildly worshipping bull-pups. He seemed glad to

see the Squire, who came almost straight to the point of his visit.

"This young lady," he said after he had introduced her, "wants a dog of an especial kind. A — what did you say it was to be, Miss Gilbert?"

"A Livonian bloodhound," supplied Rosamond, a trifle defiantly.

"I thought you could put her on the track of such a dog, if it existed. You handle about every kind there is, don't you?"

"A what kind of bloodhound?" inquired the kennelleer, bending swiftly to pat a bull-pup.

"Livonian, I believe," said Mr. Squire's deep and unruffled voice. Rosamond felt very glad that he was as tall and dignified and deep-voiced as he was, for without him she was not sure that the kennelleer would have treated her quest with absolute respect.

"Livonian?" he repeated, evidently working for time. "A plain one, now, like the one I sold Bob Fitzsimmons, wouldn't do for the lady?"

The lady answered for herself. "Not in the very least," she said energetically. She sat down on the nearest chair. To do it she had to remove a bull-pup and transfer him to her lap, where he opened one eye, turned round twice, and went to sleep again. "A Livonian one is the only kind I want."

"Well," the kennelleer admitted sadly, "I haven't any of that kind in stock. I never heard of 'em, to

be honest with you. You couldn't give me an idea of his points, now?"

"Oh, I see, you may have him under another name," said Rosamond with renewed hope. "Well, you see I only read about him in a book which didn't give all his points." She looked furtively at the Squire. She expected him to disapprove a little here. But he stood immovably behind her, expressing in every line, to the dog-man at least, that he was backing up Rosamond in her quest, and that it was an eminently sensible one. Rosamond felt a wild impulse of gratitude, and a desire to give him something — anything — he wanted. After all, there are times when it is the greatest comfort in the world to have large, conservative people back you up and approve of you. She smiled and looked up confidently at the owner of the kennels.

"The dog in the book was large and powerful, with strong forequarters and a threatening jowl; and he bore three drunken ruffians that were chasing the heroine to the ground at one bound."

"I suppose he got the right and left ones, one with each forequarter, and bit the one in the middle!" Allie broke excitedly into the conversation.

But the kennelleer was too interested in the problem before him to pay attention to Allie, who snuggled up to Rosamond as she spoke.

"I know I haven't any such dog," he said, and

added seductively, "You wouldn't like a nice little toy bull, now, nor a Pom? They'd be more of a lady's pet."

"But that isn't what I want," Rosamond explained. "You know when you really want a thing you don't want anything else."

The owner of the kennels looked at her and smiled, his face softening as people's faces were wont to soften over Rosamond's young eagernesses and enthusiasms.

"I know how that is," he said. "When I was young I used to want things that way. But when you have your living to earn you get to forget, by and bye, whether you want things or not. I guess I haven't stopped to think whether I cared about things like that for years. Wouldn't get 'em, most likely, you know, if I did."

Rosamond forgot her own quest in her interest in the man's words.

"But you would!" she said eagerly. "The only reason people don't get things is that they don't want them hard enough, or think they'll get them strongly enough. I know I'll get just that kind of a dog presently, if I can only keep on wanting him and expecting him to come trotting in. Why shouldn't I?"

She had risen in her excitement, and stood looking at the two men over the puppy in her arms, with her face vivid.

"You have to go and get things, too, if you want

them," she added. "Almost everything's there to take; if you want it badly enough to take it! The trouble is, most people *don't* want things badly enough to go and get them."

The two men near her smiled at her. There was a sense in the room as if she was making them gifts by her very promise of "things being there to have."

"You shall have the dog you want, anyway," said the kennel-man, "if I can find him for you. And I believe I'm going to try for some of those things I used to want. I never thought of it that way before."

"It's that way," answered Rosamond gaily.

"Perhaps you could find what you're looking for in this," suggested John Squire.

He reached up to a shelf as he spoke, and pulled down a large, shabby volume labelled simply "The Dog."

"That's it," the kennelleer said enthusiastically. "If there is that kind of a bloodhound she'll find him in that!"

She sat down, still holding fast to the puppy, and began to go through "The Dog" with care. Mr. Squire and the kennel-man stood close behind her, looking with her. Allie and Martha, in the background, seemed less excited, but the whole party was obviously excited about the quest of the Livonian bloodhound. Rosamond went through the book care-

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fully twice, once with her gloves on and once with them off. Then she appealed to Mr. Squire.

"Won't you look, please?" she said. "You're much more thorough than I am."

He sat down obediently and went through the book a third time, while she and Martha stood behind him and looked too. The kennel-man had become convinced by this time that the dog wasn't there.

Nobody saw Allie vanish, but vanish she did; for when they were finally convinced that wherever the Livonian bloodhound might be he wasn't in the book, there was no Allie to be seen. While the Squire stopped for a moment's private conversation with the kennel-man, Martha and Rosamond went through all the kennel grounds hunting for the missing child. But she was not to be found, there or in the machine.

"She's probably on her way to Smith's kennels, a little farther on," said Mr. Squire consolingly. "We'll drive slowly till we find her. If she comes back here hold on to her, Sherwin."

"Sure I will!" said Mr. Sherwin cheerfully. It was the first intimation Rosamond had had that he possessed a name. "And I'll hold any bloodhounds of that variety that stray in, too," he added. "You certainly ought to have that dog, Miss Gilbert."

So the machine crawled slowly up the road, with its occupants watching for the missing orphan. The road made a sharp turn a little way beyond Sherwin's. And Rosamond took a breath of relief, for there,

toiling bravely toward them, was a small figure that could be no other than the lost Allie. But she was not alone. She held one end of a worried-looking rope. On the end she did not hold was a dog. He was a large, dejected-looking yellow animal, with ragged ears; but evidently of either a crushed or a grateful disposition, because he was so much bigger than his leader that his escape from her would have been simple if he'd wanted to leave. You could see that he appreciated being somebody's dog, because every few steps he would stop to wag a tail not much smaller than his leading-rope. Rosamond took one look, and began to laugh.

"There's the child!" said Mr. Squire at the same moment, then, "What are you laughing at, Miss Rosamond?"

Rosamond tried to stop laughing, as the machine checked level with Allie and her associate.

But Rosamond could scarcely reply. "I think — I think —" she began to say, and went off into fits of helpless laughter again.

"Miss Alicia," interrupted Martha's voice of authority from the back seat, "don't you know that little ladies shouldn't pick up strange dogs? Where did you get him?"

Allie toiled nearer, and brought the dog to anchor close by the motor.

"He ain't — aren't — a strange dog," she explained, trying to get her breath. "Anyway, he

won't be. He's — why, Martha, he's —" Allie beamed all over her dusty little face —" he's that Livoning bloodhound Auntie wanted!"

"I knew it!" said Rosamond, and began to laugh irrepressibly again. The others were struck dumb. Presently Rosamond made herself stop laughing, for Allie's lip began to quiver. "Thank you, dear," she said. "It was lovely of you to go and find him for me. But are you quite sure he's the right kind? Where did you find him?"

"Do you like him? Oh, I'm so glad!" beamed Allie, coming closer, and handing over his leading-rope to Rosamond. "I didn't find him, Auntie dear. I purchased him off a man. I walked down the road and met a man. And I says — remarked — to him, 'Do you know where I could buy a Livoning bloodhound cheap?' And he remarked, 'Sure I do! I got one for sale right now! I left him restin' a piece back, and I'll sell him reasonable.' So he took me down the road a piece, an' there was this bloodhound, just as good as he could be, asleep at the side of the road. An' I bought him right away. The man threw in the rope. It was tied to the bloodhound's neck."

She patted her forlorn find proudly, and waited for commendation. But Rosamond's mind was pinned to one point of Allie's story.

"Allie, where on earth did you get the money?"

she asked, as a fearful idea came to her. "Did that man — I don't believe he owned him — sell you the dog for the quarter I gave you yesterday?"

"He wasn't worth more than that," said Mr. Squire soothingly at her elbow.

But the yellow dog wagged his tail, and whined protestingly, as if to deny that he was only worth a quarter. And —

"Oh, no!" denied Allie proudly. "He's worth a lot more'n that. He's worth forty dollars, the man said, but he sold him for the fiver you gimme — gave me — for the milkman!"

"The five dollars I gave you for the milkman!" gasped Rosamond, as the scene of the morning, when she thrust the first bill she could find into Allie's hand for the milk-bill, came back to her. Allie looked a little uneasy.

"But Mrs. Simmons always said to never pay folks the first time they brought their bills, 'cause by the next time they came you might have moved, an' then you'd be that much in. I was goin' to give it back to you, only I seen the Livoning dog, an' I thought you wanted him, an' I knew you mightn't be able to get him anywheres else, an'— an'—"

Allie was dangerously near tears, as she saw that her adored "Auntie" was beginning, for the first time since she had known her, to look severe. But she braced herself, and came close to the door Rosa-

mond was bending over. She lifted a tense little flushed face to Rosamond, who was still mechanically holding the mournful mongrel's rope.

"*Ain't he a Livoning bloodhound at all?*" she demanded wildly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RED BRICK ELEPHANT

THERE was a moment of silence. Then Rosamond sprang impulsively out of the machine and gathered Allie, rope and all, into her arms.

"Why, of course, you poor darling!" she said. "For all we know it may be. At least," she added ruefully, "there's no reason to suppose it's anything else!"

She gazed around her defiantly, over Allie's head. But nobody refuted her.

"Not the faintest reason!" replied the Squire solemnly. "You had better put the animal into the tonneau beside Allie, and we'll take him home — if you mean to keep him, that is."

"Certainly I mean to keep him," she said stoutly; though her own eyes were dangerously near filling with tears as she glanced for a moment (she did not dare to look longer) at the gaunt ungainliness of the big, forlorn mongrel who was henceforth to be her family dog.

Rosamond had not really, in her heart of hearts, expected to secure a dog who was exactly the dog of her imagination. But she hadn't seen why an

authentic Livonian bloodhound shouldn't exist, nor why she shouldn't one day find him. But one dog, expecially as big a one as this, was all she could expect to support. One of her pet dreams was gone, and this thing, which was really more of a dejected yellow nightmare, would have to occupy his place. It did seem hard!

Nevertheless she managed to laugh up at the Squire as she got in again by him, Allie and the dog having been stowed with Martha behind.

"You know," she said, "if you want to laugh at me I don't mind a bit."

But for some reason the Squire didn't seem to think her amusing at all.

"One couldn't be mournful with you for a neighbour, certainly," he said, "but I don't see how anybody could laugh at the way you took that. . . . I think our bloodhound may be hungry and thirsty. Shall we stop at Sherwin's on the way back, and see if he can get it a drink and a dog-biscuit?"

"Yes, thank you," said Rosamond meekly, though she secretly wasn't wild about having Sherwin see what she had in the way of a bloodhound. Then her hopefulness came to the surface, and she brightened again. "He'll be able to tell us what kind of a dog this is."

So, over the gratefully lapping animal Rosamond did find courage to inquire. Mr. Sherwin looked at the dog very carefully for quite a little while before

he answered. He seemed to want to be sure he was making no mistake.

"Well," he decided at last, "he's sort of founded on mastiff. Not but what he's got a dash of bull in those hindquarters. Or it might be a bit of coach-dog. And a touch of pointer . . . well, to be honest with you, Miss Gilbert, the only things I'd want to be sure that mu — dog didn't have in him would be bloodhound and Pomeranian. Not but what he looks to be a very nice dog," he added hastily. "Would you like me to have him washed up for you, and sent down to you when he's dry? He'll look lots better when he's clean and has a tasty ribbon, maybe, on his neck."

"Oh, yes," said Rosamond, brightening. "That's a very kind idea. Mr. Squire, what colour ribbon looks best on yellow dogs?"

They decided on a sage-green. The bloodhound disliked parting from Allie, but he did. He seemed submissive enough, and rather pathetically wistful.

"The spaniel will be up by to-morrow," Mr Sherwin added, and then checked himself. But it was too late. The mischief had been done.

"What spaniel?" Rosamond asked hastily.

"Oh, just a spaniel," said Mr. Sherwin confusedly.

The Squire also looked confused, so Rosamond demanded to know who the spaniel was for.

"I'll explain as we go," said the Squire. "One dog the size of that mongrel is enough," he added

as they went on home. "But I thought you'd like another, perhaps; a pretty little thing you could have for a pet. So Sherwin's going to get one for you. I hated to see you disappointed," he added in a lower voice, as if it were something he was rather ashamed about.

Rosamond smiled up at him gratefully, and he seemed surprised.

"You don't mind?" he asked.

"Mind?" she said, almost indignantly, "when somebody tries to do something lovely for me? Why, you must have thought I was a dreadful sort of a person. No, indeed, I think you are as kind as you can be. Do you know, that's the first present anybody ever gave me without any reason for it, in my life! I always wanted one that wasn't a Christmas or a birthday or any kind of a present I expected to have. And now I have it. Why, it's lovely of you. What kind of a spaniel is he?"

"He'll be a sort of golden-brown, with curly hair and a pointed little face," the Squire told her. "He ought to be here in a few days now. I'm — glad you're going to like it."

As far as liking it went, the thought of the prospective spaniel with the golden-brown curls and little pointed nose was all that kept Rosamond cheerful when the mongrel returned, which he did, along with Martha, early in the afternoon. Mr. Sherwin had washed him duly, and he was three shades lighter.

His sage-green ribbon gave him a somewhat more owned look. Allie welcomed him with rapture. Presently she sidled up to Rosamond and cuddled into her arm.

"Auntie, I never knew there was so much niceness in the world, really," she said. "I thought it was all in the story-books."

"It's right here, in the world, darling!" said Rosamond, kissing her uplifted little face. If the Livonian bloodhound grew as much prettier as Allie, she thought, after his adoption, he might become quite a noble beast in time. Allie was becoming a distinctly pretty little girl, and her manners, which had been a rather trying mixture of precocious hardness and cowedness, were almost like the kind of a child Rosamond wanted her to be. She was too enraptured with her dog, which was doubtless the first thing she had ever owned, to even ask to go to the hotel with Martha and Rosamond. So they left her sitting on the porch step with the big yellow head in her lap, talking baby-talk to her possession, and drove to the shore.

They found Mr. Jerrold pacing the porch of his red-brick elephant, undisguisedly watching the horizon for Rosamond.

"This is Martha," Rosamond explained to him. "Mr. Squire has loaned her to me for the day, to help you. You see he *is* good," she added in a lower tone. Anybody that consoled you with prospective golden-brown spaniels was, she felt. After all, you

couldn't blame Mr. Squire for declining to finance the turbine thing. "Martha knows everything there is to know about housekeeping," she concluded.

Now Martha's manners were generally of a benevolent and grand-motherly deference, but for some reason she was not more than coldly respectful to Mr. Jerrold.

"I'll do my best, sir," she promised icily. "Have you an inventory of linen and silver and such?"

Jerrold began to pat himself all over experimentally.

"I locked it up in the safe, I think," he inferred finally. "The silver is, anyway. Yes, and I locked the inventory in with it — and, by Jove, the piece of paper the combination's on is there too!"

Rosamond sat down on the counter and began to laugh. Not so Martha.

"You'd best try to remember it, sir," she said with unmistakable severity. Rosamond could not imagine why Martha didn't take to this most charming young man, who smiled sunnily at her, and sat down to besiege the safe on the spot.

"It was a seven-letter word," he explained to Rosamond over his shoulder. "And it seems to me it had something to do with your name."

"My last name, then," said Rosamond carelessly, "my others don't fit."

But "Gilbert" would not open the safe. And

neither would "Rosamond," no matter what letter they left out.

"You're sure it wasn't set to 'engine,' or 'invention,' or something like that?" she asked.

Jerrold shook his head, and frowned as he tried to remember. "No," he insisted, "it had something to do with you."

Rosamond felt interested to know what, but he seemed unable to remember for some little time. At length a great light appeared to dawn on him. And simultaneously he turned a deep, even pink and assaulted the knob again. This time it opened easily. But he had whirled it so fast that Rosamond could not see the letters he had set it to at all. So before he could stop her she bent down and pulled out the envelope marked Inventory, and opened it. She handed the inventory itself, an imposing packet of paper, to Martha, who immediately began to trot about the room comparing it with the furniture. But the slip on which the letters of the combination were written Rosamond stole for future reference. She did not read it then, only tucked it inside her blouse, and looked as if nothing had happened.

"Everything on this floor is all right," Martha announced presently to Jerrold, who had been trailing behind her trying to look intelligent and helpful. "We'd better take the next floor next, sir. The kitchen last."

Jerrold sat down on a safely inventoried piano stool, and sighed. Then he brightened.

"All right," he said. "I have the utmost confidence in you, Martha. You go ahead inventorying, and when you get through come tell me. I'd trust you with my life. Miss Gilbert and I will be out on the porch. I think there are chairs there, uninventoried, but still possible to sit in. We have business to talk over."

Martha did not say "I don't like your methods. You are a very foolish, unbusinesslike young man," because her excellent manners forbade. Her back as she went up the staircase (the elevator naturally being out of service) said it all with brutal frankness. But Jerrold and Rosamond were laughing at themselves one each side of a little table on the porch, and never saw that outraged back at all.

"Now we must start in and be very businesslike," said Rosamond gaily. "I don't in the least know why we're laughing, you know!"

"Oh, because we're young, and it's spring, and the sun's shining, and the wind's blowing in from sea!" Jerrold answered blithely, throwing back his fair curly head. And being quite fresh from college, he began to quote the Shropshire Lad:

> "Ah, Spring was sent for lass and lad,
> 'Tis now the blood runs gold,
> And man and maid had best be glad
> Before the year is old."

"It's a good idea to be glad," Rosamond agreed, "though somehow I generally am, anyway. But speaking for ourselves, I'm afraid man and maid had best get out the prospectuses — that's their name, or is it prospectii? — and plan beautiful, novel advertisements that will make the wily Following run gold — in large quantities. Oh, but it *is* the Springiest afternoon!"

She leaned back in her dusty rocker and took a long breath of the thrilling, salty spring air.

Jerrold's face had its inventor look as he chewed his pencil. "How do you find Following-elect to send the prospectuses to?" he demanded, evidently quite brought down to earth by her suggestion.

Rosamond shook her head and laughed.

"Why, I don't know!" she said. "But I'll ask Mr. Squire."

"Useful, after all, isn't he?" commented Jerrold, and Rosamond felt a little thrill of irrational resentment. "Very well, that's settled."

"And you must advertise, and bribe hackmen that meet trains to steal every one they can for you. I remember a hackman met Uncle Alvin and me once at a station, and took us to quite a different hotel from the one we'd planned to go to, because he got fifty cents from the management for everybody he sold into slavery that way. The management was awfully hurt when we wouldn't stay. . . . You ought to do that."

Jerrold burst out laughing again.

"I will," he promised. "I'll secretly approach all the hackmen, and have every last one corrupted before to-morrow night."

"But you must be kind to your guests after you have them," Rosamond reminded him dubiously. "That's what makes them into attached following — kind treatment."

"I'll remember," said he, and wrote down, "Treat guests with greatest kindness, when kidnapped." Then he looked up and laughed. "I say, hotelkeeping's going to be fun! Only —" his brow contracted —"do I get many hours a day for my regular work? Doesn't look as if I could spend more than two or three hours in my workshop."

Rosamond gave an inward gasp, but all she said aloud was "Wait and see. Your hotel will have to come first, I'm afraid." Which was letting him down easy.

They both nibbled their pencils silently for awhile after this. Then Rosamond was struck with another wonderful idea.

"Why don't you have professional escorts?" she suggested radiantly. "They do in the city. I read about it in a Sunday paper. If you are old and fat and ugly, but rich, you hire a nice young man to take you round to all the tango teas and be attentive to you, at so much an hour. Very much, I imagine. Now, the trouble with summer places is there are

never enough men to have nice times with, without feeling piggy because some other girl is going without. What you want to do is to pick out about five of the nicest, best-looking, most social-instincted classmates you had, who haven't money enough to spend the summer idly. Give them their board free, with the understanding that they're to be agreeable to the wallfloweriest girls. If they're industrious and willing they can keep a lot of girls going; three apiece anyway."

Rosamond stopped, beaming.

"I never heard of doing anything like that!" said Jerrold doubtfully. "Would it be all right?"

"Never having heard of things is a most interesting reason for doing them, *I* think," said Rosamond. "Why shouldn't you? It's a perfectly lovely idea, if I did invent it. And think how happy you'll make all the men, and how contented the girls will be! Wait a minute. We'll feature that in an advertisement."

She continued to nibble the banana-tasting paint on her pencil, and presently started writing with it.

"The Mammoth: the Young People's Hotel!" she wrote dashingly. "We are noted for our cuisine, and our homelike air of gaiety and comfort. The young men who frequent our hotel are unexceptionable in character. Prices below normal."

"Now, wouldn't that lure you," she demanded, "whether you were old or young or middle-aged?

The cuisine — that's advertisementese for cooking — for the middle bears. The comfort for the old people: we'll have to fix them a special rocking-chairy sort of place. The gaiety, and the fact that other young people are there, for young people."

"But — prices below normal?" inquired Jerrold doubtfully.

"There isn't anybody but a millionaire who won't like that," said Rosamond, "and I understand millionaires always go to hotels where other millionaires are, anyway, so they won't be conspicuous. I suppose they're shy. And as you only have six suites-with-bath, I suppose the rest of your Following will be just plain American citizens. And anyway the prices needn't be much below normal. At least, you might choose your normal."

"I will," said Richard Jerrold gratefully. "I say, Miss Gilbert, you certainly are a wonder. You remember, you get a percentage on every bit of this, whether you want it or not."

"Well, if much money's left over," yielded Rosamond. It was pleasant to think that she was going to be so beautifully self-supporting, in the face of everything Cousin Jenny had said and Mr. Squire hadn't said. "Because you don't need to make any money on the Mammoth, remember; all you want is to clear expenses and make the Following happy and attached, so your prospective purchaser will be satisfied. I can just see him," she mused, putting her

pencil back in her mouth, and tilting her chair against a convenient wall. "He'll come up on the porch and say gruffly, like the ogres in the fairy-stories, 'Well, have you complied with my conditions? The time is up. If so, I'll buy.' And he will shake a bag of gold mockingly, thinking you haven't. And you'll look at him with scorn, and whistle. 'Here, Following!' you'll say. And the Following will dash out from the house, hundreds strong, clustering round you with grateful and attached looks. And you will say proudly to him, like Mrs. Gracchi, 'Here is my Following! Following, go with the nice gentleman!' And it will do so, sadly. And you'll take the bag of gold and go off to push your rotary engine. . . . I declare, it will be very hard on the poor Following, after they've gotten attached to you!"

"Bother the Following's feelings!" said Richard Jerrold, with the remorseless light of the inventor in his eye. "By Jove! Think of putting that engine on its feet!"

"Its wheels," corrected Rosamond whimsically under her breath; but he did not hear her. He was looking raptly into the sea-distance.

"He's thinking of that old engine again," thought Rosamond petulantly. "I suppose I never can expect to be a rival to that awful animal!"

But he was not. He turned to her abruptly, and leaned across the table between them.

"Do you know how I feel?" he asked energetically.

"I feel as if I were the Prince in the fairy-tale, who had been set impossible tasks, and had come across the Ogre's beautiful daughter, in her enchanted hut. Don't you remember? He has to cover the barn with bird-feathers, and get a magic egg from the top of a highly-polished, three-mile pine tree, and do a lot of other crazy stunts or be eaten. And she shows him how. Oh, Princess, when you help me accomplish my tasks. . . ."

He broke off. Rosamond's cheeks flushed pink, and her eyes brightened. The Prince in the fairy tale . . . he was very near it, anyway.

"I'm glad if I'm helping you," she said demurely. "But who is the Ogre?"

Richard Jerrold shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, everything," he said. "Old Squire, and Aunt Genevieve's will, and the trouble about the invention. But it all seems light-hearted, somehow, and a lark, with you back of it."

"It is!" said Rosamond gaily. "The whole world is. Why shouldn't it be? But — but Mr. Squire —" She was going to finish, "Mr. Squire isn't old," when Martha's respectful voice broke in on them. They had both quite forgotten her.

"I've taken the inventory, Miss Gilbert," she addressed herself carefully to Rosamond. "There's about two hundred dollars' worth of linen and crockery needed, and one or two new beds, and some re-

papering. And I beg your pardon, Mr. Jerrold, but Mr. Squire is *not* old."

She stood severely in the doorway, as if they were naughty children, and for a moment even Rosamond forgot to feel that it was a lark.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Martha," Jerrold answered with careless good-nature. "But — two hundred dollars, plus papering? Good gracious, where'll I get it? Can you tell me, Princess?"

Rosamond shook her head. She had no idea where such sums grew.

"If I might suggest, sir," offered Martha, disapproving, but still intent on helping her utmost as her duty was, "if your property is clear the local bank will give you a note for enough to start running."

"What a lot you know!" said Rosamond, looking at Martha with respect. But Martha was not softened.

"It'll be time soon that I was getting home, Miss Rosamond," she observed for all answer, as she handed the inventory and a neat list of necessaries to Jerrold.

"We're through for the day, too, I think," said Rosamond. "Can you come up to-morrow evening to straighten out the details, Mr. Jerrold? I believe in realising dreams thoroughly while you're at it."

"I'll be there at eight," he responded: and Rosamond mounted the "little cart," whose patient pony

had been standing for the last three hours with his reins dropped round the hitching-post. Martha released him and climbed in after her.

"Queer, Martha and I both flew up when he said Mr. Squire was old," she thought, as they drove past the long rows of closed houses, in the fresh evening wind. "There must be youngness concealed about him somewhere. Martha!" she turned abruptly to the neat old figure beside her, "is Mr. Squire very old?"

CHAPTER NINE

THE DREAM OF SYDNEY BROWNE

ROSAMOND had touched the right spring to make Martha forget her obvious disapproval of what she had been asked to do.

"Certainly not," she answered. "Not in the least, Miss Rosamond."

"Then why does he live out here in the country and not have good times? If I had everything he has," said Rosamond enthusiastically, "I could have good times with it that would take in everybody for miles around. I'd be a sort of human Christmas tree. And he lives here — well, it's a lovely place to live — but somehow, he doesn't seem to *do* anything with living. He just stays, as if he were visiting at life."

But she was a little beyond Martha's depth.

"Mr. Squire is a very good man," said she severely. "There isn't many sons would have been as good as he's been."

"I thought his mother was dead," said Rosamond.

"She, bein' dead, yet speaketh," quoted Martha solemnly. "You see, Miss Rosamond, Master Johnnie's — Mr. Squire's — father died when Mr. Squire

was at the age of nine. And Mrs. Squire used to cry most of the time. And Master Johnnie used to put his little arms round her and say, 'Never mind, mother, and I'll never, never go away from home and leave you till you want me to.' He had the lovingest little heart, dear child! So Mrs. Squire, she kept him to his promise. He never did live anywhere but here, which she picked out then because it was secluded and suitable to grief. There wasn't any summer resort near, then. He never left her, not for one day, till she died. All his tutors and such came here for him."

"But she's dead now," suggested Rosamond tentatively.

"Folks gets in a rut," said Martha. Every once in a while Rosamond found with a shock of surprise that Martha knew a great deal about human nature. It seemed inappropriate to her being old. "I was hopin', Miss Rosamond, that you could see your way to shaking him out of it a little, but of course you being taken up with earning your living, opening hotels and all —"

Rosamond laughed.

"Good gracious, Martha," she said, "when I look back on my black past here at Wanalasset, it seems to me as if everything I'd done had been with a reference to shaking him! There hasn't a day passed that I haven't shocked him at something I've done."

"That wasn't exactly what I meant, but it's near enough," said Martha.

"Evidently," thought Rosamond, "she wants me to shock him so much he'll leave for parts unknown."

But she didn't feel that she wanted to. The big house up the road — well, it might be selfish, and it probably was, but Rosamond felt that she needed it and its master exactly where they were. She felt chaperoned by them.

Suddenly across her mind came a vivid picture of the dear little boy the Squire must have been. She could see him, with his big, black-lashed grey eyes and his black hair and his pink cheeks, with his sturdy affectionate little arms round his mother, trying to comfort her like a little man! And then to have that mother mean enough to hold him to his promises so hard that when she died and he could get away the spring was broken and he didn't want to! He was just the kind of a man you could do anything with if you appealed to his sense of right and wrong, or his honour and justice, or any of those feelings he had such a lot too much of. Rosamond felt her eyes filling with tears over that long-gone little boy, and the unfair deal he'd had. She made a remorseful vow never to make him do anything he didn't want to again: and was pulled up by the recollection that she'd never succeeded in that yet, whereas the Squire had made her do two or three things she didn't want to do at all, such as keeping Martha over night. And he probably enjoyed being coaxed just as much as if his mother hadn't wished imprisonment for life on

him. . . . Anyway, he could go anywhere now that he wanted to, and if he chose to stay here and exercise rights of guardianship over young seekers after happiness, it wasn't Rosamond's fault. He was the one person she knew who seemed to have absolutely everything he wanted. Except that he seemed to have fallen into a confirmed habit of being too noble for his own comfort. Rosamond remembered vaguely to have heard that it was wrong to be too unselfish. It prevented other people from exercising their virtues. And here Rosamond's natural desire to help other people to be as light-hearted as she was came into play. It was plainly her duty to train the Squire out of his mistaken attitude of mind — but not out of his stay-at-home habits.

"Thank you for telling me," she said to Martha, who had talked on steadily all the time Rosamond had been thinking. "And you won't forget to write to your sister to-night about being housekeeper for Mr. Jerrold? Thank you. Good-night, Martha. Thank Mr. Squire, too."

For the "little cart" had brought her as far as it could towards her bungalow. She jumped out and ran lightly up the path, singing as she went. She had certainly put in a good day's work for Jerrold!

Allie and the dog, who had been waiting for her on the step, ran out to greet her. As she saw Allie's curls tossing in the sunlight, and her pretty, flushed little face lighting up with happiness at seeing her

beloved "auntie" again, she felt that whatever might or might not happen, one thing she had done was right.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're back, and so is Doggie!" said Allie eagerly. "Your family's missed you *dreadful,* Auntie!"

The amateur bloodhound, who really had a certain dignity now that he'd been petted enough to feel welcome, gave a timid jump that he hadn't quite courage to complete, but which showed that he, too, was glad to see her back.

"I certainly have an awfully nice family," said Rosamond, kissing the little eager face held up to hers, and trying to pat the dog at the same time. She went in with one hand in Allie's and the other on the dog's new ribbon. Both of them crowded up close to her as they passed the doorway.

It was so nice to be loved that way, uncritically! Uncle Alvin had loved her, Rosamond supposed. But he had never thought to mention it. And Cousin Jenny's affection, though it was more real than Rosamond had any notion of, was something she could only offer furtively, so to speak, when Cousin George wasn't around. Cousin George's attitude to his wife was that any affection or presents given to outsiders was just so much of his rightful due taken from him. So to Rosamond's warm and very demonstrative nature, a small girl who beamed gratefully when you hugged her, and a yellow dog, be he ever so mongrel,

who was delighted at being allowed to receive affection, were very wonderful things. Only it all made Rosamond feel humble, somehow. You have to be used to adoring love to take it as your right.

So Rosamond and her family went in to supper, and made plans over it for borrowing Jerrold's white canoe, till they could buy one.

"But can we afford it?" demanded Allie anxiously.

Rosamond stopped a minute to think.

"Yes," she decided. "You see, dear, you paid less for the bloodhound than we expected to. So I think we'll devote the money he would have cost to getting a canoe. Only please pay the next bill I tell you to, honey. It's wrong not to pay what you owe."

Allie nodded, as one absorbing a new, but actual fact.

"Martha says that, too," she said. "Martha knows lots about the behaviour of a perfect lady, doesn't she? I wonder if she wrote that *St. Nic'las* story? She could of."

"Poor little boy!" murmured Rosamond absently. "With Martha's eternal admonitions and his mother's emotions! No wonder. . . ."

"What little boy?" demanded Allie. "Can I play with him?"

"No little boy you ever heard of," said Rosamond. There was no use explaining everything to Allie — even if you could.

That night, as Rosamond undressed in her pretty

green bedroom, a slip of paper fell to the floor. It was the safe combination which her curiosity had led her to steal. She stooped and picked it up — and gasped. "Dear me, he must be very foolish!" she said dismayedly. For the word was not her first name nor yet her last, nor even the suppressed "Anne" that she had left behind as Cousin Jenny's. "DEAREST," the paper said in neat print. Then she remembered that that wasn't the way to feel about it. For if ever there was a wish-come-true of a Knightly Lover, Richard Jerrold, with his Quest and his tossing fair hair and his light heart, was it all over. When a thing you have wished for is coming to you, you should feel properly about it. . . .

She crossed to the window and looked out, over the moon-silvered lake-water. There she had seen him first, like a picture out of a book of legends, all white and silvered, and graceful in the moonlight.

"My Knightly Lover," she mused. . . . She wished it hadn't started in to happen quite so soon. There was so much else to do. Well, maybe he didn't really mean it. But there was no use blinking it; he was evidently the thing she had expected — and was going to get. "If you want a thing . . ." said Rosamond. It would be lovely, anyway, when the real love-making started in. If he only made as good a lover as he looked! "Probably I'll dream of him," she said, and smiled. Then she left the window and slipped into bed.

"Sorry . . ." she murmured sleepily as she closed her tired eyes, "poor little boy. . . . Never . . . mind. . . ."

"The tent's come, Auntie!" she heard Allie calling gleefully outside her door at what seemed an unearthly hour next morning.

"Come in," said Rosamond sleepily, opening her eyes enough to see that it was the best spring morning that ever was.

"It's a lovely tent!" said Allie, running in. "Please button me, Auntie. It's got green stripes all up and down it. Can I play house in it when you don't want it?"

Rosamond sat up and pushed the hair out of her eyes, and wakened herself fully by beginning to button Allie's frock.

"You'd destroy the air of mystery and gloom that should hang about it," she said cheerfully. "You don't want to do that, you know."

"I don't mean to break things," said Allie hazily. "It's on the porch, all rolled up, with the man sitting on it, and he says hurry, 'cause he has to go somewhere else."

It was indeed a most sumptuous tent, quite waterproof, and capable of holding two people and a table with very little crowding. They ate very little regular breakfast that morning, Allie and Rosamond, because they both preferred to walk around the tent

where it lay prostrate on the porch, and plan things for it. A list of directions for putting it up came with it, not counting the ones the man gave them before he left. As Rosamond was strong and Allie deft-handed, they managed, after a good deal of struggling, to get it up very creditably by pinning the directions to a tree, where they could be referred to without letting go the pole and the ropes. They planted it at the very edge of Rosamond's ground, close enough to the right-of-way footpath, where the summer people would soon, she hoped, be wandering along, singing "Along Came Ruth," or something newer. The tent could be seen from the water by canoeists, too. It was altogether a most eligible situation for an industrious-minded young fortune-teller to choose.

Rosamond went inside her tent and sat there, as if she had been a small child playing house. Indeed, it felt like that. She felt as if she owned the tent more than she did the bungalow, even.

"Every bit of it mine!" she said. "And oh, what lovely times I'll have telling fortunes here, and — what a fit Cousin George would have if he knew! . . . And Mr. Squire."

Rosamond laughed again as she wondered exactly how he would phrase his objections to her performance, for she knew in her heart of hearts that he had never half believed in her actual purpose of fortune-telling. "And when he sees me in a robe of more-

than-Oriental-splendour," she laughed to herself, leaning back against the tent-wall and putting a hand on the grass at each side of her, "telling people that a long journey is ahead of them, but to beware of a dark man — oh, what *will* he say!"

Allie had played about on the grass for a little while, but when Rosamond went inside her tent to be happy owning it, the child slipped off to the house. Rosamond knew she would spend a happy morning there, playing gentle little solitary games by herself; games wherein she took long journeys and met unusually wonderful people who all turned out to be relatives.

Meanwhile the prospective fortune-teller swung a little shelf in the corner, where the ivory elephant was to live in the daytime, with a plush Wiederseim cat to keep him from too much loneliness and dignity. Grand-Uncle Alvin's Japanese crystal, too, in its holder, was set beside the elephant. With a red lantern hung from the ceiling, and two chairs and a table for furniture, the tent had an air of completeness and professionalism which made Rosamond feel that no more need be desired of life.

"The elephant's name is Ganesh, I suppose," she said. "At least that's what he probably is. And I know the cat is 'No-ma'am-I-ain't-seen-your-birdie.' Oh, what a lovely tent, if it *is* mine! And with the costume of more-than-Oriental-splendour, and a good memory for what the cards mean —"

She felt too pleased to keep still. She flung her arms up over her head, and came out of the tent, dancing a little for sheer mischief and lightness of heart.

"Where is the lit-tul *gyp*-see's home?" she carolled.

"Under the spreading *green*-wood tre-e-e. . . . That end's coming undone!"

She flung herself on it, still singing, and tied it. When it was quite tight she sat up, still singing.

It's a little embarrassing to discover that even your nearest and dearest have been watching you frisk, and it was an entirely strange girl whose eyes Rosamond found fixed on her as she lifted herself upright. She laughed, and flushed a little deeper.

"Won't you come in?" she said politely. "It's my new tent. I've just finished putting it up. Don't you think it's lovely?"

"Yes," said the other girl. "I'm sorry I stared," she added. Her voice was deep and abrupt. She was tall and thin and dark, and jerky in her movements and manner as well as in her way of speaking. She suggested a sort of out-of-gearness all over. "The truth is," she finished, still abruptly, "I was watching you be happy."

Rosamond gave a little gurgle of pleasure, and settled herself more comfortable with her back against the tent.

"You can watch that nearly any time you see me,"

she said frankly. "I seem to have an incurably cheerful disposition."

The other girl nodded gravely.

"Yes, I suppose so," she said, as if she were admitting that China was supposed to be a pretty country — not that she ever expected to go there. "I'd give a lot of money to know how you do it," she added impatiently, as if the words were forced out of her.

She could not have been prepared for Rosamond's swift, half-mischievous reply.

"Why, as for that, I'll show you with pleasure on very reasonable terms!" Rosamond answered; and sprang to her feet with a curtsy. "In me," she went on, as the perplexity deepened in her visitor's eyes, "you see a professional realiser of dreams. Terms moderate, because I'm just starting in. My name is Gilbert, Rosamond Gilbert," she added more soberly, "and perhaps I could help you — really."

"I'm Sydney Browne," said the other girl. "But you couldn't. What do you mean?" she added, "by being a realiser of dreams? Or were you just making fun of me?"

Her dark, tired-looking face had a look half of eagerness and half of distrust as she asked the question. Rosamond's own face, with its vivid expression of joyous certainty, shadowed a little in sympathy.

"Won't you sit down on the grass?" she said

gently. "Indeed I wasn't thinking of making fun of you. I meant it."

"I'm afraid I'll get my skirt mussed," said Sydney Browne a little complainingly.

"Why not?" asked Rosamond coolly. "I'm perfectly certain you don't have it to do up yourself. Do you?"

"Oh, no," said Sydney, sitting down despondently. "I have all the money I need. More than I know what to do with."

She made this rather uncalled-for statement with a mixture of pride and gloom which gave Rosamond the impression that she hated having money; and was glad she had something, at least.

"More money than you know what to do with!" echoed Rosamond, dropping beside her with a placid disregard of her own pink gingham ruffles. "I don't see how anybody could! No matter how much I had, I know what I'd do with every bit of it. First I'd buy a swimming-pool to put in my basement. . . . But this isn't business," she interrupted herself.

"Do you really mean to say you can get people what they want?" demanded Sydney Browne, sitting up for a minute. Then she slumped — there is no other word — against the tent, crushing the expensively laundered linen coat and skirt she had been guarding the moment before. "But it's no use," she added. "You couldn't help me. Nobody could get me what I want."

"What is it?" asked Rosamond wooingly.

Sydney Browne stared sullenly into the distance.

"I want to be a man," said she.

Rosamond cuddled her own slim, prettily curved body luxuriously against the tent, and settled a ringlet more suitably against a pink cheek.

"What on earth for?" she inquired. "You couldn't have any pretty clothes, nor any back hair, nor — well — nor any fun with men!"

"Who wants pretty clothes or back hair?" retorted Sydney Browne. "And I never have any fun with men, anyway!"

Rosamond reflected that if Miss Browne's attitude to the world in general was the one she was taking to her just now, she probably never did have fun with anybody; because they probably fled when they saw her the second time. Then she remembered that because Sydney was being cross and mournful with her was no sign she was being so with other people. Rosamond was told more intimate things by every one she met than most people. Some fatal fascination in her drew woes out of people whom their own guardian angels wouldn't have suspected of emotions at all.

She looked Sydney over again. She was tall; taller than Rosamond herself, who was dangerously near five feet eight. She had a dark skin and strongly marked features. She could have been handsome in a dashing, huntress sort of way, but there

was no dash to her; merely slump, which was merely partly atoned for by a pathetic over-grooming of rather the wrong kind. She should be dressed, and act, along entirely different lines, Rosamond decided.

"If you dressed a little differently you could be a lot handsomer," she began.

"I don't want to be handsome," snapped Sydney; only, if you could say so, there was no snap to her snap. "I hate being a girl. I wish I was a man, not a woman, all tied up, with conventionalities every way I turn."

"Won't you tell me about it?" asked Rosamond in her soft, persuasive voice. Sydney Browne seemed to her all wrong, somehow; all thrown out of gear. There must be some reason why the wheels weren't running smoothly, and Rosamond wanted to know what it was.

"Oh, there's not much to tell," said Sydney wearily. "I had a good time with Dad till I nearly grew up. He wanted me to have been a boy, too. I could climb any tree or jump any hurdle or fish any stream — well, I could do all those things up to the mark of any boy my age," said Sydney with a momentary gleam of pride. "I suppose I could now. Then he thought I was getting too tomboyish, or somebody else proceeded to think so for him. And I was sent off to Miss Miller's school to be finished. They finished me, all right! I was about as happy as a mouse in a cat-show. But they kept on working —

they had hopeful dispositions, those teachers of mine — and presently they worried the desire for woods and fence-jumping and tree-climbing out of me: and desire for nearly everything else to boot. Now I'm twenty-five, and unfortunately it was Dad that died, instead of my stepmother. Why do the wrong people always die? And I don't fit into being a woman one bit. I've given it seven years' trial. I can't get on with them. They bore me. Cats, things with no sense of honour and no reasoning powers, and more shrewdness than they've any logical right to. I can't deal with 'em."

"And men?" asked Rosamond without further comment.

"Same thing," said Sydney. "I want to talk man-things to them, and they want to flirt. I have money."

"Ooo-oo!" said Rosamond under her breath. She felt exactly as she had once when Grand-Uncle Alvin had taken her to a lecture which was entirely made up of slides showing what you really look like inside. "What a world to live in!" She sprang up, and looked around her for a moment, drawing a long breath. Yes, it was still a fresh, sunshiny spring day of the finest kind. She had almost expected appropriate scenic effects along with Miss Browne's mournful story. "What would you do if you were a man?" she asked.

"Take a tent and a gun and go out back of beyond

somewhere and lose myself for a week, to start with," said Sydney concisely, waving a gaunt, heavily ringed hand in the direction of the deep woods to the south-west of them.

"Your nerves do need ironing out," mused Rosamond, shaking herself free of the atmosphere of gloominess and twisty-ness Sydney lived in, by an effort. "Too much stepmother, did you say? Isn't she nice?"

"Altogether too much. Yes, nice, I suppose, only she worries me. Oh, if I were only a man!"

Rosamond took a long breath. She fixed her eyes on Sydney.

"Well," she said, "if you feel the way you seem to about this sorry scheme of things entire, why not *be* a man?"

"Brace up, do you mean?" asked Miss Browne mutinously.

"I do not," said Rosamond, leaning forward. "Go and really be a man. Why not? Lots of women have done it. There was a doctor in the Civil War —"

"My stepmother —" began Sydney with a light of wild hope in her eye.

"No stepmother," said Rosamond leisurely, "suffers from what she doesn't know about. It's simply this. If you want to do it badly enough, you will. I don't believe you'll like it, you know; I don't see how you can. But try it. Can you think of any

reason why you shouldn't if you really want it more than anything else in the world?"

Into the face of Sydney Browne came something of the expression of a hypnotic subject who has just been told that what she thought was a stone wall is a seam in the carpet.

"I haven't any friends that I care about. I'm bored to death. Everything's horrid. There's — why, there's no reason!"

"Well then, do it," advised Rosamond.

For Sydney was certainly all wrong as a girl. And for some reason Rosamond was sure that a short trial of man-life would straighten her out. At least, as she had told Jerrold, she'd have tried having what she wanted, and not worry any more.

"Only," Rosamond added, "I don't believe I'd tell your stepmother."

For the first time, Sydney laughed.

"I shan't," she said.

"And now, come and have your fortune told," offered Rosamond radiantly. "I'll tell it for you free, for good luck. Card or palm?"

"Cards," said Sydney, brightening still more.

"And after that we'll go in, and you'll have breakfast with me," said Rosamond, bringing out her cards and "laying" them expertly on the ground before her. "You'll take a long journey soon," she began. "And I see here a man, a sort of medium-coloured man, who's going to fall in love with you."

"They don't," said Sydney, with conviction.

"And here's a little, fair woman," Rosamond went on, "who has had a great deal to do with your life. She is going to be married soon, too."

"My stepmother?" said Sydney. "No such good luck!"

"But you won't mind," Rosamond went on cheerfully. "You'll be so happy yourself with the medium man —"

"Nonsense!" countered Sydney brusquely, while Rosamond began to see why she "didn't fit in with people." "I'm not interested in falling in love. And you talk about the man as if he was a steak."

CHAPTER TEN

THE SQUIRE OBJECTS

"WELL, he's only in the cards," soothed Rosamond, "and you needn't believe it unless you want to. Personally I should think you'd rather. But never mind the cards. We'll leave them here and finish after breakfast, if you like. Come on in. I only had a sort of *petit déjeuner* myself. And —" Rosamond began to laugh, "there's steak."

Sydney picked her long length off the ground and followed in obediently.

"We must plan carefully," said Rosamond gleefully as they ate. "We don't want your stepmother to worry, or to catch you at it, either! No use having a fuss. You aren't supposed to live with her by the terms of a will or anything, are you?"

"Oh, no," said Sydney. "We just live together because we always have. You know how you do."

Rosamond was not the kind of a person who "did" that way, but she only said, "Then I'd tell her I was going away for a nerve cure, one of the kind where you can't write or receive letters, nor see your friends. It's true enough. Run up to New York City and draw enough money to see you through. Get any-

thing you need in the way of clothes and stores. I'll go up, too, separately, and take a room, and meet you. You come there and change. Then you can get off at a station nearer the deep woods than this is, and there you are."

"Will you go up with me?" demanded Sydney excitedly.

Rosamond nodded. "Certainly, if you want me to. We aim to please our clients."

"This afternoon?" asked Sydney, without even stopping to smile. But she looked so happy she was almost handsome, in spite of her expensively unbecoming clothes.

"Why not?" asked Rosamond, smiling. "I told you I'd help you."

"We'll have to get there before three, so I can get to the bank," remarked Sydney, becoming businesslike. She took a timetable out of her handbag, and had no apparent difficulty in deducing a train from it. Rosamond watched her in unenvious admiration.

"She ought to be a man, all right!" she thought. "Anybody ought, that has a mind that can understand timetables. I'm not making any mistake in realising this dream, certainly." And a glow of virtue pervaded her, that lasted even through washing the dishes when Sydney had gone.

"You'd better take a room at the Ansonia," Sydney went on, taking command. "I'll meet you there

when I've been to the bank and bought everything. . . . But how will we manage about my going there looking one way, and going away another?"

"Very simply," answered Rosamond, after she had stared at the wall a minute. "Wear in a long raincoat, a strictly neuter one. Tuck a cap in its pocket. Wear a small hat and an auto-veil. Then, when you've changed, and we're leaving, wear the same coat and veil and hat. When we get in a dark place, or some such thing, I'll tuck the hat and veil in my suitcase, and you can put your cap on. And now you'll just have time to get back to your hotel and —"

"And break the news to stepmother," interrupted Sydney, grinning. "I'll meet you at the Ansonia, then." She told Rosamond where it was, and went whistling gaily down the path.

"She won't like it," mused Rosamond, as she did the dishes. "But her nerves will straighten out. She thinks nobody loves her, and she's too proud to own up to it, even to herself, poor girl! And it hasn't occurred to her to practise loving other people just for luck. . . . I wish I knew a man that. . . ."

Rosamond continued to think hard. But she could not remember any one whom she felt would suit Sydney exactly. Jerrold was too light-hearted, and the Squire — well, he was too serious-minded. Perhaps somebody'd come along.

She telephoned over to know if Martha would

mind having Allie with her that afternoon. Then she emptied her suit-case, fed the bloodhound lavishly, and took the twelve-two for the city.

She got to the hotel quite a little while before Sydney, who came breezily in at about half-past three, swinging her suit-case with joyous abandon, and walking like a college boy just off for his vacation. Her sallow cheeks burned red and her eyes were bright with excitement.

"Got every single thing," she said briefly, giving her suit-case an athletic hurl to the middle of the bed, where she dived after it and began to unstrap it. "Didn't forget a thing. Got a duck-gun and a bully fishing-rod and cartridges —"

"I hope you remembered the clothes," Rosamond suggested.

"Oh, goodness, yes," answered Sydney, beginning to dig terrier-wise at the contents of the suit-case. "Everything I'll need, sweater, overcoat, two suits, underclothes, shoes —"

Having pawed out what she wanted, she jerked off her coat and hat and began the work of changing. She looked genuinely happy for the first time since Rosamond had seen her.

"To think I might have done this any time the last five years!" she ejaculated. "And it never occurred to me before. Rosamond — do you mind if I call you that? — Rosamond, you're a mighty clever girl."

"Such beautiful hair! What a pity!" said Rosamond, looking regretfully at the heavy black braids bound about Sydney's head.

"'Tis false!" said Sydney in her deep voice, flippantly. "They aren't my own real hair at all, my dear." She unpinned the heavy plaits and handed them to Rosamond. "Here," she said, "throw them away!"

She shook down her own hair, straight and black and not very long, about her shoulders.

"Throw them away?" said Rosamond; "not a bit of it! You may need them; indeed, I have a premonition that you will."

"Rats!" said Sydney appropriately. "Now how am I going to manage so my hair will be cut decently? I don't suppose you know how?"

Rosamond shook her head, and thought hard a moment. "But I have an idea," she added, and went over to the room telephone.

"The hotel information desk, please?" she asked. . . . "Is this Information? . . . I'm a stranger here. Can you tell me if there is a Poets' Quarter in New York, like a Latin Quarter or a Ghetto? . . . Greenwich Village? Thank you. Where? . . . Thank you. There," she turned to Sydney. "Do you see?"

"No," said Sydney, very naturally.

"I can sort of box your hair," explained Rosamond, "as if you were a poet. A male poet, I mean.

Then we'll go to a Greeenwich Village barber-shop, and you'll pretend you're a poet going to reform and lead a more prosaic life, and want a real hair-cut. I don't suppose anything surprises them, down there."

The idea struck Sydney as excellent, and she sat down on a chair, while Rosamond did the best she could with her hair. When it was done Sydney grinned boyishly at herself in the glass. "Grand effect!" she said. She was dressed in a grey flannel outing shirt, a red tie, a dark coat and trousers, and heavy tan boots. She was tall and thin enough to look quite like a boy of twenty. She made a good-looking boy, at that; not particularly noticeable one way or the other, except for her big black eyes. "Some class!" she added, producing a cigarette, which she began to smoke at quite the wrong angle.

"Sh-h!" warned Rosamond, rolling up the loose ends of hair and tucking them inside a handkerchief in the suit-case, then picking up the circle of clothes on the floor and laying that away too. "You're a perfect lady yet, remember. It would never do for the hotel people to see you come in as a girl and go out as a boy. Here, slip on your coat and hat."

It was something of a struggle to get the motor-bonnet to stay on Sydney's Castle-cut hair, but the veil tied over it held it in place. Sydney pulled on a pair of dogskin gloves and the two girls started

for Greenwich Village, where a poet can do almost anything unnoticed by the throng.

"Is your cap in your pocket?" Rosamond whispered as they paid their bill.

"It's a Fedora," responded Sydney. "Now where on earth am I going to make these trifling, yet highly necessary changes?"

They were out on the street, now, Sydney in her neuter raincoat and ladylike motor-bonnet still. They looked up and down the avenue. But it was nothing like dark yet.

"If we could find some double doors," said Rosamond in perplexity.

But Broadway offered nothing of the sort just there. What it did offer was a large, alert policeman; and Rosamond remembered acutely that there were such things as laws against wearing the clothes that make you happiest, if they aren't the ones your sex should sport.

They decided on a plan finally. They walked into the nearest residential street and into the vestibule of the nearest millionaire house. But they did not ring the bell.

"Here, quick," said Sydney to Rosamond, and handed her the motor-bonnet and rain-coat to put in her suit-case. Then they waited five minutes, to give any one who had seen them go in time to have passed by. After that Sydney, the Fedora on her head, and a suit-case in either hand in a gentlemanly fashion,

led the way confidently out, as convincing a minor poet as you'd wish to see.

"Us for Greenwich Village!" she said joyfully. They took a Fifth Avenue 'bus unchallenged.

People stared at them a little, but it was obviously only because Rosamond was pretty, Sydney patently of the Younger Choir, and both of them sparkling with such joy as you seldom see on Broadway.

The Italian barber in Greenwich displayed no mistrust whatever as he administered his haircut. Indeed, he supplied his own facts.

"You maka da hit with da poetry?" he guessed. "You goin' taka da flat uptown, giva da tendency lecture?"

"You've guessed it!" said Sydney, rapturously allowing herself to be mistaken for one of the arrived-and-about-to-be conventional. The barber waved the bay rum above her.

"Oh, the brave days when I was twenty-one!" he quoted in French, and hinted that Sydney would yet look back to these long-haired Bohemian days with regret. Evidently his artistic surroundings had had their effect on him.

"Exactly," replied Sydney stolidly, while she declined the bay rum. Rosamond buried her face in her hands. The barber, if he saw her shaking shoulders, doubtless deduced that Sydney was breaking the engagement as he soared to higher spheres.

After that they caught the train. Sydney showed

a subdued desire to whistle, but Rosamond checked her.

"Look here," said Sydney, turning round on the car-seat. "You've done me the best turn anybody ever did. You said you thought of these things for a living. And anyway you're a mighty kind girl, and —" it was evidently Sydney's highest compliment —"not a bit of a cat! . . . I'd better give you your fee before I get to my station. It's the next one."

"I don't know what to charge," said Rosamond simply. "What I've done hasn't cost me any time or trouble. I only suggested the commonsense thing to do."

"Then I'll give you this much to start with," said Sydney. She opened a shiny, new, mannish pocketbook, and took out some folded bills that she pushed into Rosamond's hand. "I'm paying you for a chance at happiness, you know," she said. "If it isn't all you deserve I'll give you the rest when I see you again."

"According to how much happiness you get out of it," said Rosamond, smiling. She felt a little tired, and as if her mind had lifted something very heavy in the last day. "Come over and see me and tell me about how things go."

"I'll walk over — let's see, this is Wednesday — in about a week," Sydney volunteered. "It's only about eight miles."

"Don't forget," Rosamond reminded her, "I'll have all your girl-clothes, and everything, all ready for you any time you want them."

"I'll see myself wanting them!" said Sydney scornfully. "This is the first chance at a really good time I've had since they shipped me to boarding-school."

"And your present plans?" Rosamond asked a little anxiously, for a strange new feeling was rising up within her. She did not know what it was, but it was the sense of responsibility. When you take live human beings and set them on entirely new tracks in life there is apt to be a feeling of that sort, even if you are the gayest of adventurers in living. But Sydney's ideas did not seem revolutionary.

"Headquarters, for the present, in that little village we picked out," she said. "I'll get a tent and do some real camping later. At present I'm going to shoot ducks and collect perch, and so forth. Great Scott, think of lying on your back on pine-needles for a whole afternoon, if you like, with nobody to remind you of how mussed your frock is, or how brown you're getting, dear!"

"I know you'll have a lovely time," said Rosamond, though she couldn't forbear the thought that she herself would have been very much bored by the exclusive society of ducks and pine-needles. The world was so full of people. "Sydney!" she spoke

suddenly and earnestly. "It isn't going to be all smooth sailing, even alone with the ducks. But if things seem crossways, just remember they really aren't. And they really won't be when you've looked them over a couple of times. It's an awfully nice world. 'Why not?' said the caterpillar."

"All right," said Sydney hastily, for the train had reached her station. She made a swift snatch for her suit-case, kissed Rosamond a hurried good-bye and was gone from the train.

Rosamond watched her stride across the little platform, leap over a fence which two sleeping pigs seemed to have pre-empted, and disappear into the woods.

"Good for Sydney!" she said, cheerfully dismissing any misgivings she might have been going to have. Then she looked down at the bills on her lap, and began to count them. Ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, a hundred — gracious, she must have made a mistake! She began again. Yes, that was right. A hundred dollars, and more to come. No mistake at all — three hundred! She shut the unheard-of sum hastily in her bag, where it couldn't escape, and tried to realise it. "Three hundred dollars!" she exclaimed under her breath, happily and half-incredulously. "Why on earth —"

"Miss Rosamond?" said a severe voice behind her, breaking into her glorious visions of the things three hundred dollars could and would do. She turned,

naturally, and looked into the Squire's grey and disapproving eyes: and braced herself for conflict.

"Rosamond — exactly," she said flippantly. "Won't you come and sit by me?" she added with a gentle sweetness intended to disarm.

He dropped into Sydney's vacant seat without any further invitation, and began inquisition on the spot, without even inquiring as to what Rosamond thought of the weather. "Where have you been?" he demanded point-blank.

"Where have *you* been?" retorted Rosamond. "In the seat behind me, I suppose, seeing that I didn't do anything rash to the train!"

"Three seats," corrected the Squire, patiently.

He looked very nice, but alarmingly larger than Rosamond, and most forbidding. Yes, forbidding was exactly the word. You could imagine him opening his mouth only to forbid everything he saw, thought Rosamond.

"You've evidently been visiting my cousin George," she said. "You have his air exactly. How are things in East Warren, anyway?"

"No, I haven't," he denied. "Was that man with you a relative?"

At this very direct question she fired up.

"Ask a little more politely!" she flared.

"I beg your pardon," said the Squire, who really had perfect manners, even under provocation. "Was the gentleman with you, who bade you a pub-

lic good-bye just now, connected with you in any way?"

"Gentleman?" queried Rosamond, genuinely at sea. She could not think for the life of her what she meant. Then it came to her. Sydney! — In her convincing disguise. Her heart began to beat a little quickly, but she remembered that come what would, she must not betray her clients. She shrugged her shoulders and laughed a little, though her cheeks burned.

"Don't you know that old minstrel joke?" she asked him impertinently. "'Who was dat lady ah seen yo wid las' night, Brer Tambo?' 'Gwan, man, dat wan't no lady — dat was mah wife!'"

"Well," said the Squire, who evidently, from his lack of appreciation, didn't frequent minstrel shows.

"'Gwan, man,'" said Rosamond, though her cheeks were flushed at her own impertinence, "'dat wan't no gentleman — dat was ma friend!'"

The fact that she was merely telling the truth naturally did not occur to the Squire, who took it for granted that she did not want to tell him. But he took himself in hand with the same admirable patience he had shown throughout.

"Forgive me," he said. "Of course I realise as fully as you do that I have no right to cross-question you this way, but in a way I have, too. You have never lived entirely by yourself before, and you don't know much about the world —"

The rest of the solution came into Rosamond's head, which certainly must have been a very dull one that day. He had seen Sydney — why, yes, Sydney had kissed her good-bye. And the Squire had seen it, and was shocked. Just exactly like him, to think she would do such a thing, even if he saw it! She first felt cross, then she began to smile irrepressibly, and pile on the horror. Just why she wanted to exasperate Mr. Squire to the breaking-point over her being kissed by a supposed man she did not stop to find out about herself.

"No, he wasn't exactly a relative," she said gently. "Just a client. A very nice person, though."

"An old client — a person you've known a long time?" he asked, clinging to straws visibly.

"Oh, no! We just met to-day, and we've been spending the afternoon in town together," she said guilelessly. "Official business, you know. A poor girl must live. I've been realising a very fine dream for him. He gave me a very good fee for it, far more than I'd think a dream that size was worth."

She sat back and smiled to herself, and waited to see what that would elicit.

"Don't you know," thundered the Squire (if thundering can be done in a low voice), "that you mustn't let a man you've only known one day kiss you good-bye? Or don't you know —"

The other alternative, that she did know and still

suffered it, was evidently too unpleasant for him to want to say aloud.

Rosamond coloured up. But now she'd begun she thought she might as well go all the way.

"Why not?" said she.

For the first time she learned that the Squire had a real temper. That particular formula of hers wasn't soothing to him, at best, she knew. But she hadn't imagined that it would do quite all it did. His black brows met across his forehead, and he turned quite white with temper. He was quivering all over, too. She had heard before of people trembling with rage, but this was the first time she had ever really seen it. Rosamond did not admit it, even to herself, but she felt a little frightened. She reached out a deprecatory hand and laid it on the Squire's tense wrist.

"Truly, there's a very simple explanation," she said. "And it leaves me blameless, even according to your ideas. Only — I can't tell you."

"You can!" he said.

Rosamond looked up at him appealingly.

"But it's a secret," she said. "And not my secret. I really don't — don't kiss clients as a part of the routine. Please . . . please, Master Johnnie!"

She spoke the last words in a half-laughing, half-tremulous mimicry of Martha. And the Squire, between soothing hand and appealing eyes, relaxed a little, and the clear colour came back to his cheeks.

"Won't you give me your explanation?" he asked, and there was even a touch of entreaty in his voice. "Indeed, I am only interested for your own good, Miss Rosamond."

"But — but indeed I can't!" said Rosamond. Her joke was getting to near deadly earnest to be funny any more, but there wasn't any way out. "Won't you take my word for it that it's all right?"

"Against the sight of my own eyes?" he said.

"Yes!" said Rosamond defiantly, "against the sight of your own eyes!"

"In other words," he said, and he was becoming angry again, "it's not my affair."

She nodded sadly. "I'm sorry to seem impolite, but — it's not!"

"Then there's nothing more to be said," he ended conclusively, and looked black again. But he did not leave her.

"Wanalasset!" called the conductor.

Mr. Squire lifted Rosamond's suit-case, which he eyed, she thought, as who should say, "Why should she need a suit-case for an afternoon's trip?" and carried it out for her. Nothing is more trying than to have people who have been scolding you offer you courtesies you have to be polite about.

"I'm taking the trolley down to the landing at the lake, and the motor-boat over," she said, holding her hand out for the suit-case.

"The car's waiting," he answered, making no move

to hand it to her. "You had much better go up in it with me."

He had her bag in one hand and her elbow in the other, and there was nothing to do but go up with him, or jerk away like a naughty small girl. So she got in.

The chauffeur beamed at the sight of her, and she asked exhaustively after his wife, who had been ill. But the most circumstantial chauffeur's wife won't last forever as a subject of conversation. Talk with the chauffeur, who was grateful but not fluent, flagged, then died; and she discovered by a feeling in the atmosphere that the Squire was still waiting for his explanation.

"But I can't tell you!" she answered with petulant suddenness to what the Squire was not saying . . . "I could give you a truthful, adequate explanation that would appease even Cousin George, if it was honourable to betray clients' secrets. Oh, can't you use your imagination and plan some way that it could be all right for me to — to have done it?" Rosamond's cheeks went scarlet.

"I wish I could," he said. "But there is absolutely no way that it could be all right. But I wish you would give me your explanation."

"We're simply going round and round in a circle," said Rosamond, her voice quivering with what might have been either feeling or exasperation. "Either you hold me blameless, on faith, or — you don't."

"Oh, you are the most unmanageable person I ever saw!" exclaimed the Squire impatiently, and quite as if he owned the entire right to manage her, she thought resentfully.

"Then don't try to manage me," said she hotly. "And send the man over with the suit-case —" as they neared the usual jumping-off place, and the Squire showed signs of doing it —" and good-bye."

She ran fleetly down the little footpath, very much like a child trying to get away from a scolding. The Squire looked gloomily after her.

"Carry Miss Gilbert's suit-case over, Williams," he said. "I'll wait here till you get back."

Rosamond slowed up to let Williams drop half a step behind her with his load. She wondered if it would burst apart, and if it did, if Sydney's double plait and girl-clothes would fly out. A false braid four shades darker than your own hair might be incriminating. But it arrived without mishap.

Rosamond sat down on her own bottom step and relaxed wearily for a moment. Life was very hard. Yes, it was — even when you had your own way, and everything promised to turn out beautifully. . . . And nobody to comfort you. . . .

A soft little pointed nose pushed itself gently under her arm, and something warm and brown began to climb, a little deprecatingly, on to her knees. Rosamond stopped intending to cry, and looked down. It was the most adorable of little golden-brown dogs;

and it seemed to be certain that she wanted it badly. At least, when she flung her arms tight around it, and said, "Oh, you darling!" it wagged its little feathery tail, and whined a little, comfortably, as if it fully reciprocated. Nothing can be quite so coquettishly affectionate as a nearly-grown spaniel who has never had reason to be afraid of people. This was a spaniel with even more, so it seemed to Rosamond, than the usual sweetness of its kind. And it unmistakably knew it belonged to her.

"You darling!" she said again. "You knew your mistress was lonesome and felt horrid, didn't you! I believe the angels sent you!" And then, too late, she remembered that the only angel was Mr. John Squire, with whom she had just had a quarrel! that this was unquestionably the little dog the kennel-man had said would be up the next day. The next day — was yesterday only one day away? It seemed miles and years off.

"You come from him, too!" she said plaintively to the little dog. "Oh, doggie darling, why couldn't it have been an angel — or even a devil would have been better!" she added crossly, as her wrongs came back to her afresh.

Doggie Darling looked up at her, and then put one little golden-brown paw up to her cheek to pat it. The action was almost like a human being's. She gathered the dog up close and carried him inside, where Allie waited her, curled on the rug behind the

bloodhound, who wagged his tail unenviously as Rosamond came in with the spaniel in her arms.

"It's the little dog Mr. Squire ordered for you yesterday," explained Allie. "Isn't he a little beauty? I do think Mr. Squire's the best man in the world — except you, Auntie dear," she added conscientiously.

Rosamond began to laugh a little tremulously. "Oh, you needn't except me," she said.

"What's the matter, Auntie? Ain't you happy?" asked Allie, coming over to her and looking worried, with the big dog close behind her, copying her look of anxiety ludicrously.

"Perfectly," replied Rosamond. "At least," she temporised with her conscience, "I'm going to be as happy as if I really *were* happy. But it's a wee bit hard."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SYDNEY ATTAINS

SYDNEY BROWNE, meanwhile, cut cheerfully across-lots, swinging her suit-case. She was a very happy young person. As she recalled the joyous fact that in her suit-case there were no fluffy things to be dealt with gingerly, nor any starched ones to be sat down on carefully, she began to whistle aloud. She stopped herself, remembered with more self-congratulation that she could whistle all she wanted to now, and went gaily on again. Even the muddiness inseparable from Spring-time in the country seemed a glorious thing.

"What ye goin' through all that mud for, young feller?" inquired the voice of a middle-aged countryman who was yet hidebound enough to prefer the footpaths.

"Looking for a room hereabouts," she answered briefly. "Going the shortest way. Know of any?"

"Well, at Mrs. Fredericks' you can get room with board — but it's bad. Over Sheppard's store you can get a very good room, but hunt your own meals. And Mrs. Fredericks, she don't take it well if you just room with her and not board."

"I'll try the room over Sheppard's store," said Sydney decisively. "Which way?"

"Right down this road," answered the man, looking a little hurt at having his leisurely discourse cut so short.

"Thanks," Sydney called back over her shoulder, and fared on.

She found no difficulty in getting the room, nor in setting up a small gas-stove for cooking, nor in being blamelessly happy. She rose when she felt like it, prepared and ate her breakfast, and after making herself enough sandwiches for lunch, went off and loafed in the woods all day. Nobody cared in the least whom she was or what she did, except one or two of the younger village girls, who made unperceived eyes at her till they saw it wasn't any use. Even her hypersensitiveness couldn't feel that any one disapproved of her, or was agreeable because of her money.

The owner of the store, indeed, had something of a chronic grouch; but it was so plainly a matter of custom with him, a manner extended alike to his wife, his customers and his dog, that Sydney found herself regarding it as she did the leak in the roof; one of the immutable decrees of life, to be evaded, not resented. Peace flowed like a river.

But nothing lasts. About the eighth day of her adventure Sydney, placidly exploring the Sheppard glass-fronted biscuit boxes for something new to eat

at bedtime, heard Mr. Sheppard addressing her with a certain mournful cheer which was his when bad news was to be announced.

"Well, young feller," he announced, "chances are you'll have to find another bed'n board. I've sold the old store."

"You have?" cried Sydney crossly, sitting back and looking at him, with a fat brown cooky that was sandwiched with some unknown white substance clutched fast in her hand. "What for?"

Really, it was a most inconsiderate thing for Sheppard to do, just as she was being so comfortably happy.

"Yep," said Mr. Sheppard, perching himself on his counter with a sort of stiff abandon. "Have a cracker — free," he offered generously. "I don't mind. The feller, he'll never know. Have a hull pound of cakes. I got my money now."

Sydney waved aside his generous offer. She got up and sat on a barrel of oysters and demanded further particulars.

"He just come along," explained Mr. Sheppard, "out've a clear sky. Gimme nearly what I asked fer it. An' I've been wantin' to go down to the summer resort an' open a livery stable fer autymobiles. I got a cousin up the road that's Justice of the Peace; makes lots of arrests for speedin'. Him an' me could dovetail in together fine."

Sydney did not quite see the connection, but it

sounded sinister. She felt sorry for the car-owners, then remembered that she really should have been expending her sympathies on herself, homeless and boardless. She liked her room above the store. It was big and thick-walled, and she had just bought of Mr. Sheppard a new tin basin for the accommodation of the leak.

"Does the man want my room?" she asked. "Why aren't the rooms you and Mrs. Sheppard use enough for him? This was one of those big old brick double houses once, wasn't it? Has he such a large family?"

"Nup," said Mr. Sheppard. "Just probably will. Never can tell."

Sydney selected, and insisted on paying for, her cakes, and walked out with more disdain in her soul than she had thought to have since she had commenced the Simple Life. It was annoying to have taken Mr. Sheppard's say-so so implicitly. He was one of the people who are such professional pessimists that you begin to optimize (if such a word there be) automatically, when you have much talk with them. They exasperate you into looking on the bright side.

"Tell your man you'll throw me in with the fixtures," she called back cheerfully over her shoulders. She pocketed her purchases, shouldered her fishing-rod and went out. But she felt a little cross about it all. She lay down on the pine-needles of her pet wood, and began to munch her cakes. She was de-

veloping such a fearful appetite these days that she sometimes feared growing too plump to be convincing in the rôle of a boy of twenty. As she lay on her back, with one knee crossed over the other in a most unladylike fashion, she whistled softly to herself, and threw crumbs to a squirrel with whom she was cultivating a friendship. Life was so satisfactory here, with nobody to rub you the wrong way, that in spite of the intrusive stranger who was buying her out of house and home, Sydney felt most benevolently to the world at large. It did not occur to her that her old self would have hated Sheppard and the stranger on general principles. So much difference can pine-needles, solitude and khaki knickerbockers make in one's outlook on life!

Not even when footsteps rustled over the leaves, and somebody threw himself down near her, out of sight behind the trees, did Sydney feel wronged. She merely sat up, wrapped her arms around her knees, and said "Hello!" in a friendly way. As a matter of fact she thought it was little Elmer Pearson, who had helped her dig bait on several occasions, and was making quite a companion of her.

"Hello yourself!" some one answered, but it was a man's voice.

Sydney's first impulse was to brace herself to be agreeable, and hate the unseen man meanwhile. Then she remembered. She was not a girl now, humiliated if men failed to find her attractive. She was just an-

other fellow, and she could act as she pleased. It did not matter to her self-respect in the least if she failed to charm.

"Have some cakes?" she called across to the invader. "I have a bag here, but I'm too comfortable to get up."

"You lazy brute!" commented the other amiably, rising into sight and flinging himself down again, nearer Sydney and in hand's reach of her paper bag.

"I believe I carry these cookies myself," he observed casually after he had eaten a couple.

She turned and looked him over as he lay on the moss.

"Are you the villain that's just turning me out of my lodging as I'd bought the leak a new basin?" she demanded.

"Are you the young fellow Sheppard said he thought wouldn't want to stay in your room?" inquired the other between mouthfuls.

Sydney nodded.

"I expect he did say that. It would be very much like him. But I do want to stay. Sheppard—"

"Sheppard seems to be trying to part us," remarked the new owner of the store. He was sandy-haired and heavily freckled, but well-built, Sydney noted, and an unmistakable "city feller." He looked tired, and as if life hadn't been particularly good to him; but there was a certain shrewd good-humoured-

ness in his face that Sydney took to. He was about her age, apparently, and perhaps a half-inch taller.

"I want to stay, all right," Sydney went on. "Even if you're keeping on Clarence Merritt and his wife in the other half of the house there's plenty of room for me."

"Oh, Clarence won't continue to clerk unless he's allowed to stay," said the other. "But there's no reason why you shouldn't, too. Sheppard quite commiserated me on your leaving. Said you were good pay and no trouble."

They both laughed, and then were quiet for a little while, continuing to eat cakes.

"By the way, what's your name?" casually inquired the new owner of the store then. "Mine's Mattison."

"Mine's Sydney Browne," responded Sydney, secure in the knowledge that her name could not tell tales.

"Bully day, isn't it?" said Mattison, beginning to fill his pipe. "Smoke a pipe?"

Sydney giggled uncontrollably, then shook her head. "No, I don't smoke. I — my stepmother made me promise I never would."

"Good idea," said Mattison, sending up a cloud of smoke. "Boy of your age shouldn't anyhow."

Sydney was going to announce her twenty-five-year-oldness indignantly, then she thought she wouldn't. So she only grunted pleasantly in reply, and began

coaxing back her suspicious squirrel. At intervals she and the new storekeeper exchanged remarks. But not unless they really wanted to. And any time either of them desired to get up and go home he could, and no hard feelings. Sydney lay with her eyes half-shut, watching the squirrel, who had achieved her knee by this time, and thinking to herself that being a man had all the good points of existence and none of the bad ones.

"Time to go somewhere and hunt grub," suggested Mattison presently, dragging an Ingersoll out of his pocket. "Coming along?"

Sydney jumped up, to the squirrel's regret, and fell into step beside him. She looked him over again as she did so. A very nice sort of a person, she decided. And you didn't have to talk to him unless you wanted to.

"Are you here for good?" she asked him immediately, not having to break the silence. "Are you going to run the store yourself?"

"Here for a while anyway," he answered.

"But you aren't a country person," she volunteered. He didn't seem to fit at all.

"No — but I want to see if the country people aren't nicer than the other kind," he said unexpectedly. "Simpler and decenter, you know, and more the kind one really likes, at heart."

Sydney thought to herself that from what she knew of the term Sheppard had been describing, on which

he had sold his not specially valuable store, that they were not simpler, at least. But then Sheppard had still a rather carping mind, she recognised.

"It's the country girls I want to study specially," went on Mattison ingenuously. "They must be different from the girls I've seen."

There was a wistful note in his voice, and Sydney, looking at him critically, suddenly realised that, in spite of his rather harsh features and close-set mouth, her companion had the eyes and forehead of a dreamer. And he evidently was hoping for an improvement on "girls he'd seen." Doubtless they'd snubbed him. Sydney began to feel quite sorry for him.

"Where are you planning to get your dinner?" she inquired abruptly.

Her companion started.

"Why — I don't know. I suppose there's some place in the village where they'll feed you — at a price."

"But there's a kitchen back of the store, and a whole lot of rooms. That store was one of those old, big brick country houses people used to build a century ago for a father and mother and nine children. Haven't you investigated your own property?"

He grinned.

"Yes, but I don't suppose the Sheppards left me a course dinner sitting up on a steam table, when they moved out."

"Can't you get your own meals?" asked Sydney.

Mattison looked blank.

"I never tried. Never thought about it. I suppose I could."

Here was that rather unusual thing, a man who couldn't cook.

"Do you know of any woman I could get in at such short notice as this, or any boarding-place?"

"Only one," said Sydney, "and that's fearful. I tried it for one meal. I say —" for a bright idea suddenly struck her, "I'll get your dinner for you today. I like to cook."

It was pure good nature that made her offer. But she did like cooking, and it would be rather fun to do it for some one besides herself.

Mattison was almost too grateful for comfort, and accepted on the spot.

Entering the store was — with a gruesome difference — like walking into one of the deserted palaces of a fairy-tale, where the enchantment has descended at a moment's notice, leaving no one any chance to tidy up. The Sheppards by the terms of their contract, had departed at noon. But they had made no attempt to efface the impressions of their occupancy. The store door was locked, but the key hung trustingly on a large nail outside, with a flaring label proclaiming it "Store Key" as if dishonesty were not. Inside, the clock was going, the ice-box was half open, the cheese uncovered and a large slice

half cut: and from one corner the grocery cat wailed in a low voice, for she had been anchored by a string around one hind leg, which she resented, plaintively. She was a low-spirited, long, spotted black and white cat, who never made a loud noise at the best of times. Sydney flew to her rescue, while Mattison, muttering to himself something that sounded uncommonly like swear-words, shut the ice chest and covered the various edibles that cried aloud for covering.

"Please give me some condensed cream, or a sardine tin," demanded Sydney peremptorily. Mr. Mattison dashed across to her with an unopened tin in each hand.

"Not unopened, idiot!" said Sydney, forgetful that she was speaking to that stronger sex which has to be charmed. Mattison, however, didn't mind being good-naturedly called an idiot by another fellow, any more than any one else would. He got out his penknife and prepared the spotted cat a propitiatory meal of the best sardines.

"Thanks," said Sydney negligently on behalf of the cat, straightening herself. "Now we'll collect some stores and have dinner, or luncheon, as you please."

Mattison must have been hungry enough, by this time, to share the cat's sardines with joy. He gathered bacon, eggs, potato chips, bread, cakes and other necessaries of life from his stock at Sydney's direction, and they went to the kitchen together.

It was behind the store, together with the dining-room and two other rooms. The other half of the house, originally two long parlours, had been made into quarters for Clarence Merritt the clerk, and his wife and babies. Anybody used a room upstairs that wanted to, Sydney's being flagrantly mixed in with the Merritt quarters. It had been a very good old house in its day, before Green's Corners had decayed into a half-deserted hamlet.

"Just what you'd expect of Mrs. Sheppard's housekeeping!" criticised Sydney scornfully, crossing the threshold in advance of Mattison. Sydney was a natural-born housewife, spoiled by money. "The stove redhot, and everything at sixes and sevens!"

She tied a potato sack, which had graced the middle of the floor, over her khaki knickerbockers, and attacked the dampers while Mattison sliced bacon. It was not too hot to dine in the kitchen if you opened a few windows. After she had scrubbed the table and spread it with brown paper they spread the paper with things to eat: bacon and eggs, canned peas, and even a nice little salad which Sydney had made out of garden lettuce and more things in cans.

Mattison ate in grateful silence for quite a little while. Then he stopped and looked across at the lad who had prepared the dinner for him.

"I say, you *can* cook!" he said. "Look here. Are you here for a rest, or do you need a job? Be-

cause I'd give you — let's see — seven a week and board and lodging, to do the cooking for me."

Sydney considered. It was not that she was exactly in need of the money; but she did feel the necessity of something with which to employ her energies. She had loafed in solitude and peace for a week, and now that the rest and quiet had untangled her nerves, laziness was beginning to pall. She liked cooking, and this seemed a nice enough fellow. Besides, he owned the place, and he might put her out if she didn't do as he asked.

"What about taking me on trial?" she suggested cautiously. "We'll try it out that way for a week. If we don't suit each other we'll call it off, and no harm done. That all right?"

"That's all right," agreed Mattison thankfully, and ate up the last of his salad. "You certainly are a good cook, kid," he added. "I think we'll get along like a house afire."

"I hope so," said Sydney in a low voice. She felt foolishly near crying. He — why, he approved of her! Nobody had, unreservedly, for some years past. And to be appreciated, even as a boy cook, was illogically comforting.

Rosamond had quoted to Sydney a good deal of her guide-book, "Alice in Wonderland," during the two hours the girls had spent together: and one paragraph of it crossed Sydney's mind as she rose and began to clear away:

"It made a very poor baby, but a very fine pig."

"I suppose I'm like the Duchess's baby," she thought with a little smile as she went to and fro from table to sink, expertly stacking dishes, and whistling as she stacked. "Well, it's something to be a good pig, anyway!"

Mattison, smoking a final pipe by the open window, heard her laugh.

"What's the joke?" he asked, very naturally.

"I was just thinking of something from 'Alice in Wonderland,'" Sydney answered demurely. "Are you going to run the store all alone?"

"Well, I'm keeping on Merritt, of course," he answered. "But I can see a lot of ways already for making this the best little up-to-date store for miles around."

He went on to dilate on the plans he had formed, and the joys of a store-keeper's life.

"We'll have a lot of time over, besides what I put on the store and you put on the housework," he concluded genially. "We'll go and call on all the girls, and have the time of our lives."

A little chill came over Sydney's spirit. Even here — she had forgotten it in the pleasure of her new friend's society — even here were to be found those annoying things, girls.

"I don't care much about girls," she said indifferently, hanging up her dish-towel.

"Don't you get on with them well, generally?"

inquired her new employer. "Come on, let's go into the other room and look that over."

"Not very well," she admitted, following him into a badly littered "settin'-room" with a feverish wall-paper, and green plush chairs that made you forget its really good proportions.

"I don't, either," confessed Mattison. "At least, well—" he looked bashful—"I want to see how they will, the ones out here."

"You *are* a queer fellow!" said Sydney. But her mind was immediately taken up by other considerations. "This place needs cleaning abominably," she announced. "I knew Mrs. Sheppard was slack, but I didn't know *how* slack. I don't wonder poor old Sheppard thought life was going to the dogs. I'll have to get a cleaning-woman in."

"Gee! Clean house?" protested Mattison, looking aghast, as if he had not thought that would follow him here, any more than Sydney had expected to find girls. "Where'll I live while it's going on? Couldn't we sort of get along, or sweep out the corners painlessly a little at a time, or something? It doesn't show."

"Doesn't *show!*" repeated Sydney in an agony that should have betrayed her sex to anybody. "What an awful idea!" She ran her finger over the inside of the lamp-shades, and showed it to him, black. She demonstrated that roaches held receptions in all the sideboard drawers. She unveiled

musty horrors in cupboards and corners, till Mattison gave up abjectly. "It won't bother you a bit," she consoled him, having gotten her way. "We won't touch your room."

"Then the roaches and pieces of pie will all go up there to hide," Mattison demurred. "You'd better have her clean that, too. Only — do it as painlessly as you can."

"You'll never know a thing," Sydney promised rashly. "Now what about keeping store? You really ought to be at it now, you know."

"I'll have to take account of stock first, I suppose," he answered. "But Merritt should be there by now. Queer he isn't."

"Better go look," advised Sydney.

He lifted himself reluctantly from the chenille-covered centre table of the settin'-room, and went through to the store. The clerk had come. But he was tactfully waiting till he was inquired for, coiled restfully on the front steps. He was holding a small reception of customers, who were discussing the new ownership of the store with abandon.

"You might come in and wait on the customers, Merritt," Sydney heard the store's new owner suggest gently, as she passed on her way to find a woman to clean. She saw Merritt hoist himself up swiftly at that gentle suggestion and the look which accompanied it, and lead his flock inside. She also had a fleeting impression as she passed down the road

that some of the flock had even been startled into buying things.

A fearful amount of energy had been going to waste all the years Sydney had been kept sitting on porches, doing bad embroidery. Helped by the cleaning woman, whose name was Melinda Bradley, and whose household energies were likewise fearful, she turned everything the Sheppards had owned outdoors, and cleaned it to the bone. She even repapered the ghastly maroon sitting-room, and together with Melinda Bradley made inoffensive slip covers for the chairs and sofa. Mattison stayed outdoors meekly, or in the store. Though really most of the actual store work was done by Clarence Merritt, as it had been before, because he knew all the customers' little ways, and could show a commendable amount of interest in their family histories. So Mattison kept the accounts, and caught fish.

After the house had been undergoing purification for about three days its new owner began to be restive. He did not mind the actual cleaning so much, it appeared, as he minded missing Sydney's society. When Sydney discovered it she promptly dropped the rest of the cleaning on Melinda's shoulders, fortunately broad ones and conscientious, and followed Mattison wherever he listed. Mostly they took rods or guns with them when they went off, but mostly they used neither.

They roamed the woods, or curled over distant

wood fires in the evenings, and just talked. Not particularly about themselves. About the village, or some book one of them had in a pocket, or why people were so, or the meaning of life, or — anything. It really didn't matter, so long as it was spring, and they were doing what they wanted to, with each other to talk to and the whole of outdoors to play with. And Sydney forgot to report to Rosamond, to whom she really owed all of this happy life, for full two weeks.

CHAPTER TWELVE

MR. MATTISON

BUT in those two weeks Rosamond had been having things happen. The night she returned from her adventure with Sydney and her tilt with the Squire, she sank into her most comfortable chair and hoped that nothing more would happen for at least one day. So her telephone rang within an hour after she got back. She was just finishing her supper.

"You haven't forgotten, have you," said Richard Jerrold's cheerful voice, "that I'm coming over tonight to arrange details?"

"Of course not," Rosamond found herself answering with pleasure. There wasn't going to be any quarrelling in his direction, at least. Their relations were always the most peaceful things possible. His voice sounded pleasantly anxious to see her. "Bring along all the details you can find. Have you bought the envelopes yet, to send your announcement cards out in?"

"No, but they're ordered," he said. "You ought to see the samples, the most ornate things, engraved and trimmed up till they look like wedding invita-

tions. Anybody that got one of them couldn't help coming. I'll be up as soon as the canoe will bring me."

"Is it *him?*" inquired Allie joyously, looking up from her dessert with her face alight.

"Him — who?" asked Rosamond absently.

"Mr. Squire. I don't think there's anybody on earth as nice, do you, Auntie dear?"

"I certainly do!" said Rosamond. It was no time for compliments to John Squire, who was just now misjudging her cruelly. "And it isn't Mr. Squire. It's Mr. Jerrold, whom I like ever so much better."

"Do you want to be all alone with him, the way Avalene Simmons —"

Rosamond did not wait for comparisons.

"If you please, my dear," she said. "We have business to talk over."

"All right," Allie answered meekly. "But I'd like to speak to him first. He's very nice, too."

So when Jerrold came Allie, in her best white frock, greeted him with her best curtsy, and excused herself graciously before he had time to sit down. Jerrold did not notice her much. He was watching for Rosamond, who flashed out to him a moment later, as fresh as if she had done nothing all day but embroider.

"Oh, it is lovely to see you!" she cried. "I've had such a hard-working day!"

Jerrold looked tired, but he brightened at the sight of her.

"Clients?" he asked. "Was it a good day?"

Rosamond looked thoughtful. "It was a — a wage-earning day," she said. "Yes, commercially speaking, it was a good day. A lovely client. And just think, it gave me three hundred dollars for services rendered! Now I can have a sun-dial, and I won't have to feel extravagant about buying my canoe."

"That is splendid," said Jerrold heartily. "And to think I can't pay you anything, when I owe you everything!"

His voice was regretfully fervent, and Rosamond blushed happily. How nice it was to have *somebody* think you were perfect!

"You know how glad I am to help you the little I can," she answered softly. They were both on the porch in the moonlight. Moonlight always seemed to Rosamond to be a part of Jerrold. She had an irrational feeling that he ought to carry it around with him even in the daytime. He did not look natural without it. He was leaning against the doorpost, looking out at the sky, as they talked.

"It seems strange to think of hotels, or money, or anything else sordid in the world, a night like this," said he. "I don't feel like arranging details, do you? I feel like taking you off up the lake and singing to you and listening to you — ah, come!"

"I — do you think we ought to?" she asked irresolutely, but rising. "We ought to work."

Then she gave a little jump, for the telephone rang. She went in to it.

"Yes," Jerrold heard her say. "No. . . . I meant exactly what I said. . . . Yes, there *could* be every excuse, too! . . . Well, if you think it will do you any good. But you won't get a word out of me. I think friends ought to trust each other. . . . No. To-night? Certainly not. I'm busy with a client, and besides, you might forget and leave Martha when you went . . . No! I told you so — you are worse than Cousin George. . . ."

She flung the receiver into place on its hook, and ran out to Jerrold with her cheeks scarlet.

"Come on down to the canoe, quick," she said, "anywhere to get away from that hateful telephone!"

They went to the canoe, lying waiting at the dock. Jerrold sat at his end and dipped his paddle in lazily, and they slid unhurriedly up the silvered water. Rosamond, on her cushions, leaned back and watched stars. At length she shut her eyes and was merely happy in the feel of the cool air on her face, and the lap-lap sound of the water against the canoe.

Richard began to sing softly.

> "Stars of the summer night,
> Far down yon azure deeps . . ."

"I love that!" said Rosamond dreamily when he was done, and took up the song under her breath.

"She sleeps, my lady sleeps . . . sleeps. . . ."

"Do you mind," said Jerrold very softly, "if I think of you that way — my lady?"

"Why should I mind?" said Rosamond, softly too.

"I never met any one like you," he said fervently. His voice was a little louder, and it broke the spell of moonlight and singing and romance for a moment. Rosamond opened her eyes and sat up with a little jerk. That was exactly what the Squire had said, but how differently! *He* thought she was worse than anybody! . . . Why worry about Squires, though? She lay resolutely back and watched some more stars.

"I'm so happy these days," Jerrold went on, "that I don't believe old Jim will want to associate with me any more."

"Jim?" asked Rosamond, more to show a polite interest than because she wanted to know.

"My chum at college," explained Jerrold, coming down to earth a little, and beginning to paddle more vigorously. "Jim Mattison. Rich as all get out, and it makes him horribly blue. So we used to sit and have a gorgeous time grouching together, he because his life was wrecked by stacks of coin, and I because Aunt Genevieve hadn't come across.

Though I thought she would, then, you know, only I wanted the money on the spot."

"Why didn't he relieve himself of some of his money by passing it over to you?" inquired Rosamond, to whom this seemed a very simple solution. "Then you'd both have been happy."

"That wouldn't have been possible," explained Jerrold. "You see, poor old Jim had the idea that he wasn't attractive enough to be liked on account of himself; and as a matter of fact a lot of the fellows did love him for his cash alone. And he doesn't act that way, but he sees through things like a microscope — sometimes sees a lot that isn't there. You do, you know, if you see too much, that is. So if I touched him for a cent he'd never trust me again. And I tell you, the poor old fellow needs believing in a friend that doesn't want money out of him, a lot more than I need money for my engine. He'd give it to me like a shot if I said a word. Indeed, he's offered. But he'd never take any comfort in liking me again. See?"

"I think I do," she said, "but he's certainly curious. I'd like to see him. Why, you might bring him over. Perhaps I could help him — make him happier, I mean."

But Jerrold didn't seem to take kindly to the idea of introducing Rosamond to other men.

"Oh, you wouldn't like him," he said hastily.

"He — you see, he — well — he thinks girls want to marry him for his money."

"The brute!" flared Rosamond.

"Well," Jerrold apologised, "a lot have, you see."

"I'll explain to him at the start that I don't," said Rosamond, calming down.

But Jerrold continued to produce excuses for not producing his friend, till Rosamond said no more.

"All right," she gave in. "I'm busy anyway. But tell me more about him. How does he forget his sorrows? Athletics, or writing poetry, or what? Lonesome people always have a hobby."

"Why, the poor old bum's taken to collecting what he calls Americana," said Jerrold unsuspiciously. "Think of it, at his age!"

"Americana?" said Rosamond, to whom the word had a familiar sound.

"Everything that was printed in or about America before Washington crossed the Delaware, or Columbus hocked the jewels, I forget which," Jerrold elucidated. "Pamphlets and pictures — awful things. I read a pamphlet once. It was by a French count, and he'd dined with Benjamin Franklin when he was over in France negotiating for America. He told all about old Ben's table-manners, and said he ate with his knife. None of the count's business if he did."

"That count was probably guillotined — also with a knife," Rosamond reminded him. "So you might as well forgive him. Does your friend hunt up his Americana in a big crumbly brown-leather catalogue?"

"I think so," Jerrold answered indifferently, and began to quote poetry about being on the water at night.

Rosamond said no more. But her fertile mind had remembered the existence of that adored picture of Grand-Uncle Alvin's, which portrayed two fat black vessels shooting red fire at each other. She was as nearly sure as possible that it was the very best Americana.

It was a very pleasant evening they spent on the lake together, and quite late when they returned. And Rosamond Gilbert had certainly had a hard day. Nevertheless when she got back she sat down at her little desk, and straightway wrote a note to the misanthropic Mr. James Mattison.

"Mr. Mattison.

"*Dear Sir* (it began):

"I have a coloured picture of the *Constitution* fighting the *Guerriere*, which my late grand-uncle, a collector of Americana, prized highly. I wish to dispose of it, owing to financial difficulties. Would be glad to have you call and look at it, as I under-

stand you are an expert, and might be able to give me an idea of its possible value.

"Yours truly,

"A. R. GILBERT."

She addressed it in Jerrold's care, in a back-hand that she hoped he wouldn't recognise. Then she went to bed.

Next morning she took down two beloved Japanese prints of swirly ladies and kinky rivers, also her favourite "Love Among the Ruins," and hung the Americana picture in solitary splendour where they had been. Then she lay back and watched, spider-like, for her fly. There was little else to do, for, after being so exciting, things dropped with a sudden lull that left Rosamond nothing to do but negotiate for a canoe, and pet Allie and Darling.

In due course of time the fly walked in.

"Is Mr. Gilbert at home?" said he to Rosamond, moving his cane nervously.

He did not start back with an expression of horror at having the door opened for him by a pretty girl, as Rosamond had expected would be the case. He merely looked bored, but spoke as politely as possible. He wasn't plain, either: merely heavily freckled and rather anxious-looking.

"I'm Mr. Gilbert," Rosamond admitted, deciding to get the worst over at once. "That is, there isn't any Mr. Gilbert. If you are Mr. Mattison, I'm the

one that wrote to you. I really have an — some — a — Americana. It's hanging right up inside."

If Mr. Mattison had been about to bolt, which Rosamond did not believe, her words restrained him. He entered straightway, and made directly for the *Constitution*, doing red things to its enemy in the best possible light.

"Is this it?" he asked, laying his hat and cane very tidily on a chair. "A very fine specimen — not foxed —"

His words drifted into a murmur of ecstasy. Rosamond knew he would. At least, his symptoms so far were exactly those of Grand-Uncle Alvin's old gentlemen. She sat down on the other side of the room, by a little table on which a drop light stood, and went on with her sewing. It was the skirt, long-delayed, to her fortune-telling costume. It was gay, but she herself was not, outwardly. She was clad, as she had been every afternoon since she had written to Mattison, in a neat grey muslin with a white collar, and a little white sewing-apron tied over it. Her dark curls were pulled as straight back as they would go, and altogether she looked remarkably harmless. She had tried hard to.

"Do you like the picture?" she asked guilelessly when he had looked at it from every angle, and finally asked permission to remove it from the frame for a few moments.

He had recovered from his first excitement.

"Very well," he said cautiously. "Have you authority to dispose of it?"

"Oh, yes," she said, threading her needle. "But there's no hurry about that. We might talk a little while first."

Mr. Mattison, she was afraid, looked worried. But she went on.

"I can't live on the sale of these things alone," she said, "it is not a constant enough thing. So I have taken up a profession that I am really succeeding at awfully well."

He looked as if he wondered why a totally strange girl in a white apron was telling him her life-history. But he looked more interested at her next words.

"Your friend Mr. Jerrold is one of my clients," she said.

"You do plain sewing?" he asked politely. "I should be glad to assist you, but —"

"I never do any plain sewing," said Rosamond, dimpling. "It's something you never heard of. I help people to get the things they want. At least, I tell them how they can get them if they want them badly enough. I really *do* help."

Mr. Mattison balanced his cane and looked distrustful.

She laughed. "It's only a sort of game," she added. "You needn't be afraid of it. You needn't even look at the picture if you don't want to. But shouldn't you like to hear?"

He was more serious by this time.

"Yes, I should," he said, and listened.

"It's this way," she began, laying her needle down. "You know, there are lots of things people think you ought to want to do. But there are things, too, that nobody knows about, that you really want to do more."

"Why, how did you know that?" asked Mattison, as if it had slipped out before he thought.

"Because I'm like that, and so's everybody," said she. "It's very simple to know things about people if you're interested in them, and I am. People are the nicest thing on earth. And you know it's true. There's something, I'm sure, that you'd like to do or be yourself — something that would make you lots happier than you are, and that you think you can't do. Isn't there?"

Mattison looked at her carefully. But to the most watchful eyes there was nothing to see in Rosamond but honesty and gaiety, and an unconquerable child-likeness. You could go out with her, and come nearer to believing in fairies than with most people.

"It's silly," he said at length, colouring up into his sandy hair.

"Well, suppose it does seem so," she encouraged him soothingly, "that doesn't make you want it any less. And a thing you want so badly can't be really silly, to you."

It is hard not to confide in people who seem to understand you very, very well, and are sympathetic.

"Well," he said desperately, "I've always wanted to go off somewhere into a little country village, and own a little store of some kind there, and have people there like me and look up to me, just because I was me — you know what I mean?"

Rosamond did. What Mr. Mattison wanted was not a particularly new thing. He wanted people to love him for himself. He'd never had a chance at it, or thought he never had.

"It wouldn't be hard for the right person to do, either," she thought. "He'd be very nice if you knew him."

"Of course. I understand perfectly, and it isn't silly at all," she said warmly. "And will you let me tell you what I'd do if I were you?"

Mattison was under Rosamond's spell already.

"Yes, please," he answered eagerly.

"Go and do it. Never mind if you do feel silly. Go buy your nice little village store, and settle down there, and stay till you're tired of it. Can you think of any reason why not?"

Mr. Mattison looked at the wall that faced him, but he was not thinking, now, of the Americana picture.

"By Jove, there *isn't* any reason why not!" he said, seeing a light.

"None," said she.

"And the girls there aren't tricky or scheming," he mused. "Just nice, innocent, sweet country girls."

"Certainly," said Rosamond. "I am sure there are splendid ones."

Mr. Mattison blushed. Rosamond was coming a little too close to his thoughts for comfort.

"Well, it would be a rest, anyway," he said. "Thank you, Miss Gilbert. You — you won't say anything to any one, will you?"

"Why, of course not," Rosamond said. Her heart began to beat faster with excitement, as she took a final plunge.

"There's a little village about eight miles from here, called Green's Corners," she said. "You can get shooting and fishing there, and peace. There are lots of nice country people there, and you could probably buy any store you wanted to if you had enough cash in hand."

"Did you say near?" said Mattison.

"Eight miles," she repeated. He seemed favourably impressed by the idea, she noted. She went on praising it till any one would have thought that it had at least been the home of her ancestors for ten generations. Mattison stood up and listened on his feet, with an interested expression still on his face. When she had exhausted her praise of Green's Corners Rosamond stopped, a little apprehensively, to hear what he would say about it all.

"It sounds like a good place," he remarked finally. "I'll try it, anyway, for a week or so."

He would go there! The little imp of mischief who shared quarters with the large spirit of benevolence in Rosamond's heart gave a silent yelp of joy.

"I shouldn't be surprised if you liked it fairly well," Rosamond said guardedly and demurely, aloud.

"Well, perhaps," said Mattison, seeming not to want to appear too hopeful. He shook hands with her, and turned to go. He had forgotten all about the picture, and so had she.

As he neared the door somebody else knocked at it, hard.

"Come in," said Rosamond, and the Squire's tall figure blocked up most of the doorway.

He was not a startlingly new visitor. In fact, it was the third time in three days that he had come to see Rosamond; each time with an added firmness of manner and fixity of purpose. And each time she had been quite as firm with him, in her refusal to tell him why she had done what she had done.

She introduced him to Mr. Mattison. Neither man was dazzlingly effusive. Then Mr. Mattison went, and Mr. Squire stayed, continuing to stand in the centre of the room. As he was well over six feet and built in proportion, also as he had dark clothes on, and a darker expression, the effect was such as to make any one shiver who had any weight

on her conscience. Rosamond, sweetly expectant, sat down again by the little table.

"Do sit down, Mr. Squire," she begged courteously. "A lovely evening, isn't it? Won't you have a chair?"

"No, thank you," said he.

There was a certain amount of nervous tension in the air, and Rosamond giggled.

"Take two chairs," she said frivolously. "Oh, there! Mr. Mattison never said a word about the picture!"

"Mr. Mattison, I infer, is a client?" asked Mr. Squire.

"He is," said Rosamond as stonily as she could manage.

"Miss Rosamond," spoke John Squire suddenly, taking a hasty step toward her, "I'm worried to death about you!"

"I suppose you want me to have Martha come and live with me," she said mutinously, for they had gone over all that before.

"At least she would be a help to you," he said. "Indeed you ought not —"

"You weren't worried like this before," said Rosamond, bending closer over the scarlet finery in her lap, so that the hurt tears should not show in her eyes. "It's that you don't trust me, any longer. Please don't talk any more about it. You only torment me."

"But, Miss Rosamond —" he pleaded. He never finished that sentence.

It was evidently destined to be Rosamond's evening for receiving. For, without having telephoned, trampled, or in any other way advertised his presence, Richard Jerrold appeared at the doorway.

"Good evening," he said blithely, sweeping his hat from his handsome head.

"Oh, do come in!" cried Rosamond gladly. "You remember Mr. Squire, don't you? The one I borrowed Martha from for you. How is everything going on down there?"

"Splendidly," he answered eagerly. "I've got bunches and bunches of applications. Got 'em in every pocket. I brought them up to show you. Martha's sister is coming to-morrow. Her name's Anna Woolman, and I'm to call her Mrs. I'm certainly awfully obliged to you, Mr. Squire, for letting me have the benefit of Martha's experience, and getting her sister through her."

"Not at all," said Mr. Squire. "Good-night, Miss Rosamond. I won't keep you from your work any longer. Good-night, Mr. Jerrold."

He walked out.

"I'm goin', too," announced Allie, emerging from the kitchen, followed by her shadow, the Livonian bloodhound. They had commuted his name and title to Livy by now, and he was quite a dignified and well-liking dog. The pair flew down the steps after

Mr. Squire, and they saw Allie catch his hand and swing it. He bent down to smile at her and speak to her in a friendly fashion.

"Nice chap," said Jerrold. "Why, he's not old a bit. You always gave me the impression that he was."

"I told you he wasn't," said Rosamond, laughing. "But he always treats me as if I were ten and he a thousand. After you get over being really young I don't suppose a few years more or less matter, do you?"

"I suppose not," he answered.

"Have you the applications?" asked Rosamond.

"Why, yes!" he said. "I told you. Have them in all my pockets. I brought paper, too. I thought we might answer them together."

He laid piles of paper on the little table, and they sat on each side of it, working soberly for awhile beside the light.

Rosamond looked up, presently, at his light-gilded head, bent above the letters, and felt a pleased and placid sense of possession. It was all working out so beautifully. Surely he would succeed with the Elephant. Already Martha's sister's letters had breathed a comforting spirit of know-how into them, already the corps of professional good-time-givers had been culled from the flower of Richard's class. All the necessary repairs had been made, the note had been taken out of bank, payable in the height of the

season, and — judging by the piles of applications — there would be people to fill the hotel to overflowing. Martha's sister, when she came, was to engage the servants. And Rosamond had succeeded in filling Richard with something of her own spirit — that it was a joyous young lark to run a hotel.

And when the summer was over, thought Rosamond, forgetting that Mrs. J. Simonton desired room and board for herself and three adults with pug, happy things would go on happening. She leaned back, away from the letters, and began making pictures to herself. After the hotel-work and fortune-telling was all over, Richard would push his invention. After it was all pushed — Rosamond had a vision of one mighty shove that would send it flying rotarily down the aisles of Time — there would be lots of golden, beautiful Fall, wherein she and Richard would ride off on a steed apiece. And Richard would be knightly and adoring, and she would be his liege lady. And when John Squire came over, all six-feet-two-and-broad-in-proportion of him, and objected to things, she would wave her hand in the direction of Richard. And she would say (or what amounted to it):

"Sir, there rides my true knight and defender. Please discuss such little matters with him."

But . . . if she went riding off on the milkwhite steed with Richard probably Mr. Squire wouldn't be

along to object to things! She laughed out at the idea of it all, and Richard looked up and smiled.

"What was it — a funny letter?" he asked.

Rosamond flushed a little and laughed a little.

"Only a funny idea," she answered demurely.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE

DESPITE her slight feud with Mr. Squire, Rosamond awoke in the freshness of the next morning to a sense of duty well done. And the first mail, duly brought over to her by one of Mr. Squire's men, added very much to the feeling.

"I have gone to Green's Corners," said a special delivery letter of much terseness from Mr. Mattison. "Country store can be bought. Thanks. Check follows."

Rosamond wondered, but not with much anxiety, about the check. Sydney's three hundred was still slumbering almost intact at the bank, and there was the fortune-telling yet to be started. A nice little red canoe was bobbing up and down at her dock, all her own. Everything was almost all right.

She felt happier, naturally, over her success as a Realiser of Dreams than as a collector of checks. They were only a side-issue. But —

"Three dreams well on the way!" she said to herself proudly, "and all my long, lovely summer to keep on doing it in!"

Around sunset, as she sat in the swing-seat, she

wondered as she swayed why Mr. Squire hadn't been over to make his daily protest. They were softening as time went on, for Rosamond was a person whom was very hard to be angry with. She wondered, too, why he stayed so persistently in her mind. He wouldn't get out of it, either. It wasn't that she felt remorseful toward him, because she didn't. Any remorse was due from the other party to the disagreement. It was simply that he was — well, he was on her mind, and that was all there was about it! And she looked down the path again for the daily protest and felt a little impatient.

"You get used to even quarrelling," she declared to herself defensively. Though, again, she didn't know just why it was necessary to defend herself *to* herself.

And she saw a man's hat rising above the slope of the path, landward, a hat with black hair under it, and sat up gaily. But it was only Sydney Browne, striding up, tanned and cheerful and whistling outrageously as she came. She waved her hat as she came closer.

"Hello, Rosamond!" she called. "I came to report progress, as I promised."

She dropped on the top step and continued to look exceedingly happy.

"Do tell me all about it!" implored Rosamond.

Sydney leaned back against a post, embraced one khaki knee, and proceeded to tell her tale.

"I didn't start out camping right away," she began.

"I knew you wouldn't," Rosamond answered.

"No," nodded Sydney. "I bought a little tent and rubber blankets and so forth that day in the city, you know, but they didn't get there for some days. So I took a room over a little country store.— What's the matter?" for Rosamond had uttered a smothered squeal.

"Nothing, nothing at all," answered Rosamond hurriedly, "do go on!"

"It was rather a nice room, and I knew my stepmother wasn't going to trot in and kiss me goodnight and try to find out what was in the last letters I'd received, so I was awfully happy — for one week only, as the stock companies say. Because just as I'd finally decided to give up the camping-out idea altogether, and spend my days in the woods, along had to come a brute of a young man and buy the whole store, my room and all. At least, I felt as if he was a brute then. You see, I wasn't over that horrid 'he's-a-man,-now-look-pleasant,' feeling. But he really wasn't a brute at all."

She leaned back again and looked pleasantly reminiscent.

"But his name!" said Rosamond feverishly. "Oh, his name, Sydney *dear!*"

"His name?" repeated Sydney indifferently. "Oh, Mattison, or something of the sort."

"Glory be!" breathed Rosamond to herself. "Oh, then he took it!"

"Oh, yes, he took it," Sydney answered unsuspiciously. "But he didn't put me out." She smiled to herself again softly. "He said I seemed like a nice young chap, and would I like to keep my room? And I said I would. But I'm really looking after the house for him now. I got it quite decently clean. . . . Rosamond, there's nothing to being a girl, nothing at all! What's a little back hair, or a few evening gowns? I've got a chum, a real friend, for the first time in my life. Splendid, honest fellow. I sit out on the store porch and talk to him, nights, or I keep quiet if I want to. I don't have to be charming. I don't have to powder my nose. . . . He's had a lonely sort of life, poor boy. He's told me about it a little already, one night when we were out looking for squirrels by moonlight."

"Do squirrels bite better by moonlight?" inquired Rosamond, as she thought sympathetically, "I thought they went to bed."

But her innocent question apparently jerked Sydney back from a pleasant muse, for she frowned.

"They don't bite," she explained shortly. "You shoot 'em."

"Oh, you shot them?" asked Rosamond, still at sea.

"No, we didn't," Sydney owned absently, a dreamy light still in her eyes. "He sat on a stump and I

sat on the ground, and he told me about things. . . . Oh, Rosamond, he's a very unusual man. I didn't think there were any men like that any more. . . . And he does need looking after so!"

Rosamond gave a subdued little chuckle.

"Does he run the store all right?" she asked.

"Yes — no — I guess so," said Sydney doubtfully, as if that were a matter she had not considered. "I think the clerk must mostly, though, now I come to think of it, because Jim and I spend most of our time in the woods. Talk about *love*," said Sydney scornfully, "it's *nothing* to the friendship that can be between man and man!" She rose. "Well, I must be getting back," she concluded briskly. "Thanks awfully, Rosamond."

"You're ever so welcome," said Rosamond, "and any time you want girl-clothes, and your hair, I have everything ready for you, including a very nice switch I had made up. You can change at a moment's notice."

"Rats!" said Sydney appropriately, kissed Rosamond carelessly, and tramped off whistling.

Rosamond dropped down where Sydney had been, and began to laugh. She was still laughing to herself in a subdued way when she felt a presence above her, and looked up to see John Squire, who seemed threatened with a recurrence of his worst variety of temper. She expected a storm, but he said very little. But what there was of it was to the point.

"I won't trouble you for an explanation this time," he said in a low voice. "I won't trouble you at all after this, indeed."

That was absolutely all. After that he turned and went back where he had come from.

They were neat, well-rounded sentences, doubtless. But they hurt. They hurt horribly. All the fun and the playtime and the summerness and selfconfidence dropped out of everything with a thud. A chilly, end-of-the-world feeling came shiveringly up to surround Rosamond in their place. And she couldn't see why. Yet . . . No more Squire, domineering and helping and being put in his place, and acting as a protesting guardian angel! Just peace and freedom and being ignored. It ought to have been pleasant. . . . It was the most unpleasant sensation freedom-loving Rosamond had ever known in her life. She sat up with a light of battle in her eye.

"Just for that," she said, "just for that, I'll go down to Dick Jerrold's hotel this minute and read palms. I'll wear Oriental robes and a black mask — I'll wear a dressing-sack if necessary!"

And, as if her words had been an incantation and he the Slave of the Lamp, up the path came Jerrold, smiling and kind, as he always did when she most hated John Squire.

"Want to come out in my canoe?" he asked. "I have a lot of things to consult you about."

"I haven't had supper," began Rosamond doubt-

fully. She didn't want to go out with Dick. She wanted to go to her own room and take time to feel wronged.

"Haven't had supper? Good!" said Dick buoyantly. "We'll have it up at Farley's under the trees, and celebrate. That's an awfully good little dog you have there," he added, for Darling had not happened to be present when he had been with Rosamond lately. "Where'd you pick him up — another of the Princess Alicia's acquisitions?"

He grinned, for the tale of Allie and her Livonian bloodhound had been too good to keep, and Rosamond had passed it on to him. The bloodhound himself, by the way, was a treasure-trove except for his violent appetite. He was a good watch-dog, had blameless manners, and distinguished as well between shabby people who ought to be bitten and well-dressed ones to be wagged at, as the most snobbish kennel-trained animal of pedigree. He also looked after Allie and Rosamond like a father.

Rosamond picked up the silky little spaniel and held him to her cheek as she replied reluctantly,—

"Darling was a present from Mr. Squire in the dear dead days when he almost approved of me. He was a consolation prize for my being so good about the bloodhound, I think."

"You really oughtn't to be so hard on Squire," said Richard as he went down the lane with her, after the irritating fashion man has of standing up for

man. Rosamond did not answer directly. She wished he'd let her forget her failure to get on with John Squire. A professional realiser of dreams ought surely to be able to realise the ideal of living at peace with her neighbours.

"What's happening down at the Mammoth?" she inquired as they got into Richard's canoe.

Richard laughed and dipped his paddle deeper.

"I don't know why I'm able to smile," he said. "Just because I'm in your cheerful presence, I expect. What's happening? Everything that can. This whole hard-working day men have been trying to sell me things. This morning there came a man with a patent fire extinguisher, and three with canned foods, and one with a new temperance drink that tasted like burnt crusts, and one to sell paper frills for lamb chops, and another one with a patent perfume that you squirt in the corners after a guest leaves, so the maids needn't clean the room —"

"Richard Jerrold! Not *really!*"

"Absolutely really," Richard answered resignedly. "It was Jockey Club and very, very strong. He said it killed germs, too. I don't doubt that. It would make me commit suicide if I were a germ — I'd die of horror. The lamb-chop-frill man was the worst, though. He insisted that guests never ate chops unless they had frills on. He intimated that they gave their chops one haughty look, and if they — the chops, I mean — weren't fully clad, they rose

and called for their bills and never came back any more."

"What nonsense," said Rosamond practically. "They don't demand costumed lamb chops, not at twelve a week and up."

"I wish it were nonsense," admitted Richard dejectedly, "but the fact of the matter was, that man got me so buffaloed I bought two thousand frills. As for advertising men, they simply have to be swept off the doorsteps in the morning, they're so thick."

"What about the boarders themselves?" Rosamond remembered to inquire.

"They seem to be a minor detail," said he, "but I have quite a lot already, worse luck."

Rosamond trailed her hand in the water, and looked over at the sunset. It made a long pink path up to the very end of the lake.

"What is the matter?" she asked sympathetically. "Do they bark and bite?"

"Not yet. But they growl," said Richard sadly. "They growl horribly. Mrs. Woolman says it's to be expected, but it worries me."

"Oh, Mrs. Woolman's come?"

"Yes, thank goodness," said Richard devoutly. "She's a tower of strength. She's a little severe with me, but she keeps everybody else straight, too."

"What's the particular trouble, then?"

"Various things," said Richard. "Do you re-

member the Mrs. J. Simonton who wrote for terms for three adults and pug?"

"M'hm," nodded Rosamond. "She came, did she?"

"Yes," said Richard with what was nearly a groan. "They all sleep in the same room, adults, pug and all, and the pug snores very badly. At least they say it's the pug. And the people next door don't like it. They're going to leave unless the pug stops snoring."

"But you can't make a pug stop snoring!" said Rosamond, beginning to laugh. "And you can't make people, either, because they never believe they do it. It's too insulting to themselves."

Richard sighed.

"Exactly," he said. "Well, what on earth can I do?"

Rosamond thought a moment.

"There isn't anybody deaf, is there, who could exchange rooms with Mrs. J. Simonton's neighbours?" she asked finally.

"I don't think so," said Richard, but he brightened a little. "I'll see when I get back. But that's not the worst of it. They all hold me responsible for the weather!"

"For the weather!" Rosamond looked at him in astonishment.

He nodded dolefully.

"Yes. I don't mean that they give me any par-

ticular credit when the sun is shining. They accept that no more than I should do, and frisk off to have good times. But when it's cloudy, or it rains so they have to stay around the hotel, they make life a misery to me. They gather around me and make pointed remarks about how long it is since it was clear, and how curious it is that there are so few fair days, till I feel as if I'd give untold gold to have eighteen kinds of weather in a sack behind the desk, like the Iceland witches. They think I have, anyway. They seem to believe it's sheer perversity on my part that keeps me from turning on bright days with an electric-light switch. And the worst is yet to come. Look at that moon!" It had risen by now, ringed with mist and circled by mackerel clouds. He pointed to it tragically with his paddle. "It's going to be bad weather again to-morrow!"

"But those classmates of yours. They're down, aren't they? The men we thought would keep the girls amused."

Jerrold nodded.

"Oh, yes, they're here. But they aren't much trouble, anyway, the girls, I mean. They seem contented enough if they can lean over the desk and talk. It's the older women. I didn't bring the bunch down to look after *them*, you know. It wouldn't be fair."

Rosamond considered. It is hard to be revengeful when you haven't a disposition that can't be made to hold malice. It had always been something of a trial

to Rosamond that she couldn't stay angry more than two hours at the most. But going down to the hotel to tell fortunes wouldn't be revenge alone. It looked like a stern duty. Indeed, it couldn't be revenge, because she found herself a little reluctant to do it; and it is well known that revengers enjoy being revengeful.

It did seem curious, when she came to think of it, that she had been all this time in Wanalasset, and had never yet gotten around to the thing she had been going to adopt as a profession — fortune-telling. Instead of that, she had been kept so busy realising dreams for Jerrold and Sydney and Mattison and Allie, and seeing that, once realised, they worked right, that she had never once advertised herself as a superior fortune-teller; never once clad herself in a robe of more-than-Oriental splendour and sat awaiting customers in her dear green-striped tent. She and Allie used it to have tea in, and the bloodhound had developed a fondness for sleeping there, because he could open one eye and watch for tramps beneath the tent-flies, while he slept in the shade.

"Why are you so quiet?" Richard asked anxiously. "Have I worried you with my tales of woe?"

She shook her head.

"Not the least bit in the world," she said warmly. "I was just thinking that I could amuse your guests for at least one wet afternoon. You remember you

said I might use your foyer to tell fortunes in? Well, I'll be down to-morrow if it rains, in a hack, in costume, and I'll read palms and tell fortunes otherwise till dinnertime."

"Oh, Rosamond, you angel!" Jerrold burst out, taking her hand impulsively. She took it promptly away, though she didn't see why she had, thinking things afterwards, considering that she and Jerrold would probably be lovers by the time the summer was over, and it had to begin some time or other. If your own true knight that is to be mayn't hold your hand, who may?

"No, I'm not an angel," she said, shaking her head. "It's pure self-interest. I intended to do it when I came here, and I've never got around to it till now, that's all. And I may make heaps of money at it!"

"What made you think of coming down here, anyway?" asked Jerrold idly, watching her. She was always a pleasure to watch, she flashed and changed so at every word she spoke.

"Stern necessity, and a desire to be happy though necessitising," she answered cheerfully. "I had to earn my living, and I didn't see why I shouldn't do it in my own way, and enjoy myself as I went along. Do you remember in Jean Ingelow's 'Mopsa the Fairy,' everybody's always saying, 'What you can do you may do, in Fairyland'?"

Richard shook his head. It was no use trying to keep up with Rosamond's mastery of fairy-books, an-

cient and modern. She had apparently read all there were in the world.

"Well, they do," she said, referring presumably to the fairies in "Mopsa." "You know — or perhaps you don't — that I was brought up by a grand-uncle who, to put it mildly, didn't believe in fairies. Also he never saw any reason why people should want to be happy. He was, though, in a certain manner, now I come to think of it. He collected Americana like your friend Mattison, and I remember hearing him tell a fellow-Americanist once that there was no joy like it, so — why, he must have enjoyed living in a way! His manners never betrayed it, though. But outside of the pleasure of paying much, much more than you need to for little dingy pamphlets with f's for s's, he didn't approve of other folks' joys. So I grew up with him, and so did my cheerful disposition. I must have been a natural-born happy person. I certainly never was given any training in it! But the way I account for myself is principally that I formed my character out of fairy-books. Grand-Uncle Alvin thought that as long as I was reading I was all right, and doing myself good besides not bothering him. So he let me. And of course, when you're fairly sure that the ideals of the person that you live with are wrong — and any small child can see a thing like that — why, you have to get ideals somewhere else. I got mine out of the fairy-books. Why, even yet —" Rosamond's dark eyes lighted whimsically,

"even yet, I'm not sure that if somebody cut off poor old Livy's head and tail and threw them in the fire, he mightn't turn into a fairy prince! But the principal thing I learned from the fairy-stories was that people ought always to end by living happy ever after. There's never any reason why not in a fairy-book. And there's rarely any in real living, either! So I didn't see why I shouldn't go off and seek my own fortune, and be happy while I was doing it."

"And is it a good fortune so far?" he asked.

Rosamond laughed.

"It isn't finished yet. But I'm sure it's going to end *beautifully*. I shall be very much surprised and disappointed if I don't end by reigning over three kingdoms with all my dreams realised, and giving away three more among my relatives. . . . That's the way the fairy-tales always end, you know. Why not? as the Caterpillar said."

"It's rather a feminist fairy-tale you're planning for," said Richard. "I think you have it a little wrong. You marry the Prince who owns the three kingdoms, and it's he who passes out slices of realm to your wicked relatives, or else rolls them downhill in spiked barrels, according to all the fairy-stories of my recollection."

"I'm sure that would hurt," said Rosamond thoughtfully. "No, spiked barrels have gone out. But — if he was a very nice prince — it would save

trouble, anyway. I don't know, though. I like my kind of a fairy-tale better."

"If you have as much success in realising your own dreams as you have had with mine you will certainly do well," said Jerrold. "But I don't see how you've been left any time to do your own things."

"Indeed, I've had heaps of time!" she answered gaily. "I've realised nearly half the things I set out for, already."

"Would you mind telling me what they were?" Richard asked.

He seemed more interested in her affairs and less in his own than he had ever been so far in their dealings together. You always feel that when a man is genuinely anxious to talk to yourself about *you*, he is — well, he doesn't dislike you, anyway. That is, unless he is a professional scalp-collector, which Richard, nice straightforward boy that he was, certainly was not. Rosamond looked at him and felt obliged. Then she remembered that she had quite the wrong feeling. She should have felt thrilled, and wildly happy. Gratitude should have been only a small part of it.

"I suppose I'm not like other girls," she thought sadly. "I'm not an easy faller in love. There *must* be thrills somewhere in me. Well, perhaps they'll come later if I'm patient."

"You've forgotten to tell me about the dream

you've realised already," said Jerrold, and his voice sounded very eager and interested.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," Rosamond replied quickly, colouring. "Well, I wanted somebody to look up to me, and regard everything I did as just right. That sounds awfully egotistical, you know, but when you're young—"

"*I* know," said Richard with feeling. "Nobody does. They expect you to do every bit of looking up that's done on the premises. Aunt Genevieve—"

But that way, Rosamond knew, madness lay. Aunt Genevieve led directly to the turbine engine, and Rosamond felt selfishly averse to talking turbine for two hours straight, this particular evening.

"Allie was the answer to the looking up," she interrupted him. "And I wanted a Livonian bloodhound."

They both burst out laughing at that.

"Never mind," she said, "I've come to the conclusion that he's as near one as there is. I'm afraid Livonian bloodhounds are myths. Anyway, if they aren't even, it's impossible to go to Livonia and look, till things are a little tidier in Europe. There mayn't even be any Livonia."

"Oh, yes, there is," said Richard, late of Yale. "It's somewhere in Poland. What else?"

"To lie on the grass and look up at the stars for a whole evening, without being made to come in, or anything like that. It's been a little chilly for that

"Here's Farley's," said Richard

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yet. . . . I have a queer feeling as if that never were going to happen. And I haven't eaten ice-cream in the forenoon yet, either. I always wanted that, because it's an especial no-reason-why-not that nobody ever thinks of doing."

"What else?" inquired Richard again. But the two next things that Rosamond remembered were a Japanese silk nightgown and a Knightly Lover. No particular use mentioning such a trivial thing as a nightgown, and as for mentioning a Knightly Lover — well, one simply couldn't, with the man Fate had cast for the rôle sitting up looking at one!

"My bungalow was one," she said demurely, "and telling fortunes was another. I'm doing very well."

"Here's Farley's," said Richard, sending the canoe's keel grating up on the shore, and helping her out dexterously before it tipped.

They walked out into the circle of lights on the lawn, to the sound of the tinkling mandolins, and sat down at one of the little tables dotted about under the trees. A waiter came bounding toward them, and Rosamond buried herself in the menu with the idea of finding out the most unhomelike dishes and ordering them.

She selected something, at last, with a French name that spread over a line and a half, and the reflection, "If *he* were here he'd tell me I mustn't have it because it was indigestible!" the shadow of Mr. Squire's presence, which had been accompanying her

thoughts everywhere of late, looming up even on the menu.

"He's as bad as the head of Charles the First in Mr. Dick's memorial," she said petulantly, and by mistake aloud.

Jerrold, across from her and buried in another menu, lifted his head with a quick brightening of his expression.

"Did you say 'Dick'?" he said. "I do wish you'd try to call me that after this. You will, won't you? I hate not saying Rosamond."

She coloured. But there was no use going into it all again, or explaining what she had really said. And perhaps if she did call him Dick it might get that dreadful Squire-presence out of her mind a little.

"Very well — Dick," she acquiesced, looking up at him from under her lashes. "I'm going to have this, but I can't pronounce it. You'll have to show it to the waiter. He probably knows what it is."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE MERRY ZINGARA

THEY got home at a reasonably early hour, so Rosamond got up unreasonably early next day, and went sewing on her costume of more-than-Oriental-splendour. The skirt was done, but owing to the need for haste the rest of it wasn't particularly gorgeous. Indeed, for a fortune-teller it was, as the vaudeville bills say, "quiet and refined to a degree." She managed to make a little black velvet bolero to slip over one of her white silk blouses. She also happened to own a black tinselled scarf which she draped around her waist with great effect. And she crowned the edifice, or perhaps founded it would be the better word, with a pair of black velvet evening slippers. She draped a lace scarf over her head, and decided that she would have to do, though she did not quite satisfy her own ideas of what a gipsy should look like, at that. She was not mysterious-looking enough. And all the fortune-tellers she had ever encountered had been fat.

"That's for the fortunes, isn't it?" asked Allie, coming in and leaning against her knee before she put it on.

"Yes, dear," answered Rosamond, wishing that Allie was not so clever for her age.

"Are you going to sit out in the tent and wait for customers?" Allie demanded next. "It looks like rain."

"No," answered Rosamond, who was not good at evasions, "I'm going down to Mr. Jerrold's hotel this afternoon, if it rains, to tell fortunes there."

Rosamond expected that the next thing on Allie's part would be a demand to be allowed to go along. But Allie had something quite different on her mind.

"Do you know," she reminded Rosamond softly, looking like a little angel with her curls falling over her blue frock, and her wide eyes upraised to Rosamond's, "do you know, dearest Auntie, you've never thanked Mr. Squire for the little brown dog? He isn't a really big dog, like Livy," she added, "but he's enough of a dog to thank people for. Martha says little ladies —"

"Shades of the Elsie books!" cried Rosamond, half vexed, half amused, "and I thought I'd hidden myself from people who wanted to bring me up properly! Allie, darling, I'm not a little lady. And I do wish —"

She wanted to end, "and I do wish you'd attend to your own affairs," but she could not bring herself to hurt the child's feelings. Though another of her visions was crashing about her. Where was Allie's

attitude of absolute belief? And, like everything else, it was John Squire's fault.

Allie never blinked. She held her graceful little Lady Loveliness pose, and her wide eyes never left Rosamond's face.

"I think you ought to thank him," she repeated firmly.

Rosamond gave her an impulsive, half-cross hug and kiss.

"I know it," she said. "All right, you wretched little angel-child. I'll do it now."

She knew, herself, she ought to; but she had been putting it off and putting it off in a very cowardly fashion. For it is embarrassing to thank people for little dogs, even when the little dogs are adorable, if you are certain the people despise you and consider your conduct entirely wrong. For that was the way, Rosamond knew, that Mr. Squire must feel about her. The remembrance of it kept a little spot in her mind hurting still, away down under the cheerfulness.

"At least he ordered Darling for me away back when things were all right, and each of us thought the other was nice," she decided. "So I must write the note as I were back there, too."

And she did. Not that it wasn't hard. Yet she finally got it as courteous and as gay and as grateful as if these days were still the days when she and

John Squire got on fairly well on the surface, and were, a little beneath the surface, the best of good comrades.

"Here, Alicia," she said. "You may take this over to Mr. Squire. It's the note of thanks for Darling that you wanted me to write."

"Oh, *thank* you!" bubbled Allie rapturously, and was off before Rosamond could offer her anything more than the note. Livy the bloodhound loped solemnly after her.

Rosamond caught Darling in a sudden hug.

"Oh, Darling, if it wasn't for you what would I do?" she said.

Darling put out his little pink tongue and kissed her cheek, and so she had to put him down, and went on with her sewing again. There was not so much to do to it, but that she was through, and had luncheon all ready before Allie returned.

"Did you deliver the note?" demanded Rosamond.

Alicia nodded, while a certain cat-that-ate-the-canary expression overspread her small, seraphic face.

"Yes, dear Auntie," said she.

"And what did Mr. Squire say?" Rosamond asked.

"Nothing. That is, he said, 'Tell her I'll answer her in person.'"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Rosamond. "He *is* such an unforgiving person!" Though when a man threat-

ens never to trouble you again one day, and promises to answer a note of thanks in person shortly afterward, he is really not as unforgiving as he might be. "Allie," she went on whimsically, "sometimes I wish you could be a mother to me. I feel as if I needed one. It would be ruinous to your training if I told you what I think of John Squire, and I do so want to!"

"Mrs. Simmons always told me what she thought of Mr. Simmons," suggested Allie with simplicity. "She swore, too, sometimes. Fearful. So I guess you wouldn't hurt me. Go on, Auntie, you'll feel lots better if you do."

"Come to luncheon," said Rosamond in a tone she seldom used, but which, used, made Allie invariably obey in awed silence.

And after luncheon, exactly as if some one had turned on the weather on purpose, it began to rain.

"My fatal vow!" said Rosamond ruefully, for she didn't want to go a-fortune-telling one little bit. She'd had five hours of Richard the night before, which meant two with the turbine engine; and even the remembrance of Richard's tender eyes and soft words and pleading voice, when he wasn't talking turbine, failed to make her want to hire a hack and go down to oblige him through the rain.

"It's because I'm horrid and feminine and curious," she accused herself. "I want to stay home and have a little fire, and hear what Mr. Squire has to say.

. . . At that I suppose it wouldn't be a bit pleasant to hear."

But Rosamond always kept her promises. She went up to her room and put on the costume just the same as if she had wanted to. She looked very pretty in it, so pretty that her spirits rose a little. She wrapped herself in her cloak, telephoned for a hack, and sat down to wait. She was on pins and needles, because if John Squire got there before the hack did (and he never stopped for rain) he might disapprove of her adventure. So when at last the hackman summoned her it was a great relief, and she hurried down the lane with him, and jumped into the hack with her old delightfully adventurous feeling of Eliza-escaping-from-the-bloodhounds. And so narrow was her escape, that as they drove past his house she saw Squire striding down his steps.

"He couldn't really do anything but disapprove," she reminded herself. "And there's no reason why I should mind his disapproval as long as I know I'm right." But she did, and all the way to the Mammoth she wondered at it.

The Mammoth guests, bored by the rain, and rather stupid because, for lack of something better to do, they had eaten too much dinner, sat about the foyer in little groups. Some of them rocked and some crocheted. Most, as it was mid-week, were women. The younger ones were nearly all around the desk, and Rosamond wondered what on earth Richard kept

back there that was so exciting. But when she glanced through a crack between two of the girls, she discovered it was merely Richard himself, trying to do accounts, and rather flurried by so many watchers.

She flung back the hood of her cloak boldly, thrust out one bare, braceleted arm and touched the girl nearest her.

"Tell your fortune, pretty lady?" she asked in the time-honoured formula which no fifty-cent fortune-teller ever uses. Then she dropped into the vernacular. "I'll do yours free, and another, to start, and to show that I do good fortunes."

Richard had jumped as if he was shot when she spoke. Now he dropped his head over his figures, and she saw his shoulders quiver. A man's sense of humour, it occurred to her, was certainly a queer thing. The girl Rosamond touched turned, showing a pretty, sunburned face.

"Oh, how splendid!" she cried, and led the way promptly to a corner, with nearly all the rest following her. Richard had at least a little time for his figuring.

Rosamond read palms cleverly. She put more brains into it than the average fortune-teller, as she had explained to Cousin Jenny before she left for Wanalasset to seek her fortune. She did her very best with the two girls who were free samples, and when they were through other applicants, at thirty-

five cents a hand, were easy to come by. The ones who weren't being done clustered eagerly around the ones who were, and listened with the greatest excitement. Rosamond had thought that only the young girls would have any interest in the palm-reading, but the older women, no matter how many years had gone eventlessly over their heads, were as excited as ever over what time was left to them. Thirty-five cents after thirty-five cents the palmist dropped into the picturesque bag which swung from her waist. She had jubilant visions of a new frock for Allie, and, if all went well, a harness that should set off Darling's charms to perfection. She told on at her fortunes with half of her mind, while the other meditated on the beauty of earning lovely amounts of money by dressing up and reading palms of a rainy afternoon.

Towards the end of the girls and the beginning of the older women she came to a little lady who was rather more attractive than the rest. She was a small, fair woman, rather too prettily dressed for a rainy day indoors, and she hadn't brushed off the powder quite enough. But she had a sweet little pointed face with arched eyebrows and a long chin, the kind which makes people feel protecting. She might have been anything from a worn twenty-eight to a young forty. She seemed feverishly anxious to know everything that her hand said.

"Can't you do it another way yet?" she asked

when Rosamond had told her everything that she could think of by palmistry. So a pack of cards was found, and her fortune told all over again that way.

"Do you see anything about a woman, a dark woman?" she asked.

"An enemy, do you mean?" asked Rosamond, looking up from the cards; because in card fortunes if you are fair a dark woman is bound to be an enemy.

"No, oh no, not an enemy at all," said the little fair lady nervously. "I want to be as good to her as I can. But I'm worried about her. I thought perhaps the cards might say where she was."

People make startling confidences over having their fortunes told. Rosamond was not at all surprised at being told this much.

"A relative?" she asked without much curiosity.

"My stepdaughter," the little lady answered.

Rosamond took a long breath.

"Would you mind," she said, "telling me your name?"

"Why, no," she said. "Browne. Mrs. Adeline Browne."

Rosamond shuffled the cards again to gain time. So this was— this must be — Sydney's dreaded stepmother, this harmless, little, nervous, over-mannered lady, of whom the worst you could say was that she was fussy! And then Rosamond remembered that little fair women with fluttering manners and long

chins usually have wills of their own; and that Mrs. Browne had unquestionably spent her stepmotherhood in trying to make big, direct, impatient Sydney into a small and fluffy person with appealing ways. She could quite reconstruct the effect it might have had on Sydney's nerves, granting the best will in the world on both sides. She addressed herself to the cards again wondering just how to meet the situation.

"Yes, I can see the dark woman here in the cards," she said. "She has gone away for a — for a rest in a quiet place. She is very happy, and thinks kindly of you. You will see her in —" Rosamond stopped to reckon on the cards —"in three. Three months, you know, or three years or three weeks. Weeks, maybe."

Mrs. Browne sat back with a little involuntary sigh of relief.

"Of course it's very silly, and I don't believe in the cards a bit, but it *is* a comfort to have them come out that way," she said. "She did say she was going off to a rest cure, one of those horrid places where they won't let your own family write you, you know — but she looked so happy I wasn't half sure. When she looked that way I was always sure, from a child, that it was time to watch her hard, and stop everything she was doing on the chance that there was mischief behind it."

Rosamond was certain now. But she was still un-

sure what she must do. She wished she could reassure the little stepmother, who plainly wanted to do only too much of her duty; but she could not begin anything without Sydney's permission. She would have to write Sydney, or go to see her, first.

"Wouldn't you like to come up and see me, where I live?" she asked Mrs. Browne. "I should be glad to read your fortune again, just for my own amusement. You have a very interesting fate. I think I could see something more of your relative in my crystal."

She was not positive how the little stepmother would take this. But she jumped at it.

"Why, thank you very much. I should be charmed to come," she said. "Please tell me where to find you."

"Mr. Jerrold can tell you," she said. "But please don't tell any one else. It's a very exceptional thing for me to have clients where I live."

"I won't breathe a word to any one," vowed Mrs. Browne. "What day shall I come?"

They appointed the following Thursday, after which Rosamond went on with her next sitter. She had hardly informed the lady that she had strong intuitions, but was too idealistic for the good of her own affections, when she heard a step on the bare foyer floor that made her fling her head back, and instinctively look up.

"Is Miss Gilbert here?" she heard the Squire's

voice say. One's own name carries across unbelievable spaces. "I should like to speak to her, if she is."

Rosamond whirled around and stood up. Richard, she saw, did not quite know what to answer. She excused herself to her sitter, and crossed to the desk, where she looked straight at the two men.

"What is it?" she said, not over-enthusiastically.

"I'm sorry to interfere with you in the successful exercise of your profession," said Mr. Squire, "but I'm afraid you'll have to come back home with me."

His manner — he who had never been going to trouble her again! — was very gentle and compassionate. Rosamond looked him over again. He seemed to have forgotten how much he disapproved of her. But she did not forget how much she disliked having her pleasant and profitable afternoon broken into this way.

"Are you trying to persecute me?" she demanded in an angry undertone. "You haven't a right in the world to come and make me stop this. I suppose Allie told you, and you've come in your car, with Martha all complete, to drag me away. Well, I won't go unless you pull me out shrieking wildly. And I have a dreadfully wild shriek. I wouldn't do it if I were you."

"I won't," said he grimly when she stopped to

get her breath. "I will merely offer you the hospitality of my car, and the chaperonage of my housekeeper, in case you want them yourself when I've finished what I have to say. Your cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Hoskins, the ones, I think, that you refer to as Cousin George and Cousin Jenny, are at your bungalow, and seem to be going to stay there till you come back and render an account of yourself."

Having completed his errand, he ceased.

Rosamond stared at him. Then she took one unconscious step closer to him, and looked at him — she did not realise how appealingly.

"Oh *dear!*" she said. Then she drew back, straightened up, and laughed. "We about to die salute you," she said over her shoulder to Richard. "Good-bye, Dick. I seem to be about to go home in Mr. Squire's car!"

She drew her cloak about her with dignity, and went decorously out with her captor.

"The honours of war are with you this time," she said to him. "Only you ought to lead me along on the asphalt behind, in chains, instead of giving me a seat inside your chariot."

But Mr. Squire had seen the quick compression of her lips, and the effort it was to her to be flippant.

"Poor child!" he said. "Don't bother to talk; just lean back and rest. You must be tired."

"I feel like the heroine of a melodrama," said

Rosamond, but leaning back as he told her to: "'Driven Back Home: or, The World Against Her!'"

"Now don't you be frightened, Miss Rosamond," Martha put in unexpectedly from the rear seat. "I'll help you out all I can with that severe cousin of yours, and so will Master — Mr. Squire."

Rosamond reached over the back of her seat, and caught Martha's hand and squeezed it.

"You dear, I know you will," she said. "But it's not so much that I'm frightened as that I'm afraid poor Cousin Jenny is going to feel badly about me. I know Cousin George has made her think that a policeman ate me years ago."

But for all she spoke bravely, it was a comfort to feel that Martha was not arrayed against her. She did not expect any mercy from Martha's master. She had gone counter to him since the very first day of her arrival. She had done those things which, according to him, she ought not to have done, and left undone all the proper and conventional things which she ought to have done. The Squire — she couldn't help still thinking of him by that name occasionally — was a living statue to the god Precedent, according to Rosamond's idea of him; and Rosamond herself had never had any use for Precedent at all. And, helped courteously out of the car, and escorted up the steps in her gipsy-frock, she felt very much led to judgment. Now was the time, if the fairy

tales were true, and Rosamond still believed they were, for the appearance of the rescuing Knightly Lover. But alas! he was toiling at his Quest down yonder, with a perfect Parsifal-garden of maidens around his desk, and she didn't see how he could come.

She walked into the house with her head back and a smile on her lips. Her spirit, as usual, went up to meet the occasion.

Cousin George was sitting on the chair nearest like the ones he owned at home, with the same look of inexorable waiting with which he collected bills. Cousin Jenny, looking as apprehensively affectionate as ever, sat a little behind him, her clasped hands working a little nervously in their black silk gloves. The two of them, together with that print of the *Constitution* which Mattison had forgotten to buy, and which still hung on the wall behind them, created such an illusion of East Warren that Rosamond had to look again at John Squire to be sure that she was truly in Wanalasset still.

"It's lovely to see you, Cousin Jenny, dear!" she said, coming over and kissing her cousin. "How do you do, Cousin George?"

Cousin Jenny clung to her silently for a minute. Cousin George got up, shook hands gingerly, as if he feared it would commit him to something rash, and sat down again.

"This is Mr. Squire," Rosamond went coolly on, "who lives a little way up the road, and has been

looking after me — in a way. This is his housekeeper, Martha."

Cousin George unbent quite a visible ways.

"I have met Mr. Squire," he granted. "In fact we called at his house on our way to look you up, Anne Rosamond."

Rosamond gave a shiver at the sound of the old name. . . . Mr. Squire, it appeared, had made his usual impression on the middle-aged and proper.

"I knew you'd be twin souls!" she could not resist throwing over her shoulder at Mr. Squire, who still stood gravely behind her.

"You might ask me to sit down," he replied in the same low tone she had used, and to her surprise in the same old half-teasing way. She had thought that was buried forever, and to see it emerge from its grave lightened her spirits unaccountably. She had certainly forgotten her manners. She ceremonially begged him and Martha to be seated, and sat down herself, throwing back her cloak as she did so. Cousin Jenny gasped.

"Anne Rosamond! Have you been to a fancy-dress party?"

"I've been fortune-telling," said Rosamond sweetly. "Don't you remember I told you I was going to? I've earned *lots* of money."

"You did say you were going to, but we had no idea you spoke seriously," said Cousin George severely. "Otherwise, I must admit that your be-

haviour had been far more circumspect than I believed possible. But your cousin and I must insist on your doing nothing more of *this* sort. I have been talking to some agents in the town below, and they inform me that this is an easily rented property. So your cousin and I will be glad to have you at home in East Warren as soon as you have rented it for the summer. You need not think of — ah — remuneration. We should regard you as our guest. Then in the fall you can start in on some course which would fit you for supporting yourself through life. Mr. Squire will pardon me for discussing these private affairs before him, I am certain. You have been in charge of my wife's cousin's doings to a certain degree, I understand, Mr. Squire."

John Squire, who showed no intention of leaving until put out, assented gravely. He did not seem to reciprocate Cousin George's affection for him.

"But, Cousin George," expostulated Rosamond, "I don't want to do any of those things. That's why I went off without seeing you. I knew I couldn't tell you so that you'd believe it. But I suppose I might as well tell you again, anyway. I'm going to go on living here, where I can be happy. There's no reason why people shouldn't enjoy themselves at the same time they're supporting themselves. I have everything I want, and I'm living where I like and doing what I like to, and making enough money to live on besides. You don't especially like my society,

you know you don't. And when you think it over reasonably, *is* there any reason why I shouldn't be doing this? There isn't one solitary reason why not. . . . Do you think you'll stay over night with me?"

"I think not," said Cousin George, who had been very impatient during Rosamond's speaking. "As to your own staying here, it's foolish. In fact, I've put the cottage into the hands of all the agents for rent, already.

Rosamond threw back her head indignantly.

"You had no right to do that!" she said. "I'm two years over age, and even if I hadn't been you never were my guardian."

"They say it will rent very easily," responded Cousin George, as if the difficulty in renting were the only objection a female in her senses could offer.

Rosamond looked around the room in half-terror. She was so tired! You can't fight a world forever that only opposes a calm "because" to your "why not?"

"What *shall* I do?" she said under her breath.

Then she became aware that Mr. Squire was answering for her, and that Cousin George was giving him the respectful attention he always vouchsafed men; especially prosperous-looking ones.

"I am sorry, Mr. Hoskins," he was saying, and for once Rosamond was glad of that deliberate, weight-carrying manner of his, "but what you pro-

pose is impossible without forfeiture of contract."

Such beautiful big businesslike words! And they seemed actually to affect Cousin George.

"The deed under which Miss Gilbert bought this place of me," went on the Squire, "especially stipulates that she shall not rent it to any one in the summer. I am sure you don't want your cousin to lose her property."

Cousin George snorted.

"What an immoral contract!" he growled. "No one but a foolish girl would be deceived into signing it."

"Nevertheless," went on Mr. Squire very firmly, and with his lips very straight, as if he were getting a certain youthful enjoyment out of it, "I must insist on the fulfilment of the contract."

And Cousin George gave up.

"Nothing can be done, then," he admitted. "Unless — I'll tell you, Anne Rosamond. There's only one thing to do. Your cousin and I will come down and stay with you this summer. There isn't any fool clause —" Cousin George glared respectfully at Mr. Squire, who still sat wrapt in the perfect business calm that was his on occasion, "there isn't any fool clause in *our* deed about renting. We'll pay you board, Anne Rosamond, or we can balance it against your board next winter."

"Anything, so I can't have my harmless own way!" said Rosamond.

Mr. Squire spoke again, and Rosamond was certain she heard a subdued elderly chuckle from the chair which held the decorous Martha.

"The deed forbids that, too, Mr. Hoskins. No boarders may be taken."

Rosamond looked at John Squire in unmitigated admiration. Was it possible that any deed ever evolved by the mind of man could be so suited to an occasion? She did remember vaguely some conditions of his of the sort, which he had mentioned when he sold the house to her, but she had never thought about them again. She was quite prepared to hear him announce with the same businesslike calm that the deed forbade Cousin George to scold her, on pain of forfeiting his own property. And she had come to the place where she knew if Mr. Squire said so Cousin George would believe that, too. But why, why, why on earth wasn't her landlord joining forces with Cousin George, his natural ally? Why had he given the impression, which Cousin George had plainly accepted, that he and Martha had chaperoned her to an impossible extent? The world was certainly turning upside down. . . . Yes, it was, for Cousin George was going!

"I should like to talk to you a little further," he was saying to John Squire with undiminished respect. "If you will walk a little way back with me toward the dock, while I wait for the motor-launch. These lots look to me as if they were ripe for development."

A look of mutual horror at the idea of "developing" their beloved woodlands along Cousin George's two-family house lines flashed from John Squire's eyes to Rosamond's. But Mr. Squire rose nevertheless to accompany Cousin George. Martha made no move to go.

"I'll stay here, Master Johnnie," she said. "I find I'm a little tired. You will come back for me, won't you?"

"As soon as I can," he said, giving her an affectionate look as he went out behind Cousin Jenny.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LOOKING AFTER MARTHA

COUSIN JENNY, meanwhile, had kissed Rosamond again before she rose up to follow her lord.

"Write me as often as you can, dearie," she whispered. "I've had more pleasure out of that lantern — you can't think! Not but what I needed a dress-pattern more," she added hastily as in duty bound. "I miss you dreadfully, dear."

"I wish *you* could be here with me," Rosamond returned. "Good-bye, dear. Yes, I'll write."

She had written as fully as she could, ever since she had left. It was a drawback, though, to freedom of correspondence that Cousin George always opened and read his wife's mail.

"She's welcome to read all mine," was his argument in favour of it, the fact that he never got anything but requests for estimates having nothing to do with the case in his eyes.

Rosamond, left alone with Martha, knelt down and put her arms around the old woman.

"You darling!" she said. "I know it was all

your doing. Oh, Martha, I'm so glad you and Mr. Squire kept them from carrying me off to their den-o."

"It wasn't I specially," denied Martha. "I never said a word to Master Johnnie. He don't want you carried off no more than I do. Why should he?"

"Because I'm a bother to him," said Rosamond mournfully. "I'm sure I worry the life out of him. . . . I wonder why it worries everybody so when you do things they don't do? Lots of people do things that I don't, but I never worry about it, or try to make them live in bungalows on lakes, and tell fortunes and keep bloodhounds."

"There's very few like you, Miss Rosamond," said Martha admiringly, and then caught her breath. "Would you mind just opening my reticule over there and getting out my aromatics?" she added in a catching voice.

Rosamond flew to mix her some ammonia and water, and helped her to the couch near by. The attack passed over in a minute, and Martha sat up, still panting a little.

"Don't tell Master Johnnie," she said. "It'll only worry him, poor boy."

Rosamond promised not to, rather against her will. But she resolved to leave the spirits of ammonia where Mr. Squire could not fail to see it and ask why it was there.

"I wonder why people always take him for such a

staid, trustworthy, conventional citizen?" she mused, going over to the window to watch for him. "He was enjoying the mischief just as much as I was, while he was bluffing Cousin George. And he's almost like a boy, some ways, just get far enough under that stately grown-up-ness — the way he was never going to speak to me again, and now getting me out of trouble with both hands, like an angel of light! I never met anybody like him in my life. . . . And he's just as big, inside, as he is out. So many great big men that look like statues of Hercules and all the rest of the people in the picture-books, are such tiny little things inside! . . . If he only could believe just that one little impossibility about me! I wish they'd brought him up to believe in fairies. . . . And I thought him just the kind of a person Cousin George does now, when I first knew him, and for quite awhile afterwards. . . . Martha! Why does everybody treat your Master Johnnie as if he was a very elderly gentlman to be given much respect? I mean, except you — and me."

"On account of his mother, Miss Rosamond," Martha answered readily, seeming to understand exactly what Rosamond meant. "Others have noticed that, too. He took care of Mrs. Squire so long, and stayed by her so close, that he got to act older than his years."

"Oh, I don't think people think he's much older than he is," returned Rosamond negligently. "I im-

agine he looks about his age. Only he seems — settled, sort of."

She turned a little as she spoke, to watch for him again. Settled or unsettled, he had been a perfect tower of strength, and she felt inconveniently grateful. For it is inconvenient to feel gratitude toward a benefactor who still considers you a wayward and unrepentant person.

He was evidently having something of a conference with Cousin George, the vanquished; or perhaps he was merely being polite, and keeping them company till the motor-launch came by on its half-hourly circuit. It did not stop at Rosamond's little dock, except on signal, so it had to be watched for.

She was still leaning and dreaming by the window, and watching for John Squire's broad shoulders to rise above the slope of the path, when a little moan from Martha made her hurry over to the couch again. Martha's hand was at her side, and her breath was coming short again.

"It's bad once more," she said with difficulty. "I expect you'll have — to get — the doctor."

Her lips were blue and her face drawn. It evidently hurt badly.

Rosamond was a good nurse. In a flash she had Martha's clothes loosened and her corset unclasped. She gave her another dose of ammonia, and banked the pillows high behind her. Then she telephoned for the doctor, whose name Martha managed to give

her. She filled a hot water bottle and put it to her patient's cold feet. Then having done all she could think of, she sat rubbing Martha's hands to get the circulation started, while she waited anxiously for the doctor and John Squire.

The doctor, thanks to a swift motor-car, got there first. It seemed like ages to Rosamond, afraid every moment that Martha would have another paroxysm. But he said that Rosamond had done all the right things.

"You aren't living here now, Mrs. Lillie, are you?" he asked. (It was Rosamond's first intimation that Martha had ever possessed a last name.)

Martha shook her head.

"Not — altogether," she said painfully. "I've been here on and off looking after this young lady."

"Ah, yes, I see," said the doctor. "All the better, because you can't be moved over to Squire's; not for some days. The jolting over that little path through the wood would be too much for you. This young lady, Miss —"

"Gilbert," Rosamond supplied, flushing a little at the doctor's look of more than ordinary interest, and then remembering that her gipsy-dress would account for his keen inspection.

"Miss Gilbert," went on the doctor, "— thank you — can arrange to have you sleep on this floor, I hope. Can it be managed?" he asked Rosamond.

"I have a room that can be turned into a bed-

room, easily," she said, still rubbing Martha's hands, for it seemed to relieve the old woman. "Mr. Squire will be back soon, I am sure, and he can arrange about it. He's down at the dock, seeing my people off."

"Ah, yes, I see," said the doctor again. He seemed a pleasant person, but given to watching you intently.

Just then Mr. Squire did come back, and took in everything at a glance.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come," said Rosamond, flinging the last vestige of feud to the winds in her joy at having a helper. "Can you go down cellar and bring up the cot Martha slept on the first night she was here, and put it in the little room behind the living-room — the one I use for a dining-room now?"

"You'd better take some directions from me, first, John," said the doctor good-naturedly. "To begin with, as I was telling Miss Gilbert, Mrs. Lillie can't be moved yet awhile, not even carried up-stairs. If you would like to have a trained nurse for her I think I can get you Miss Atkins, though there's really nothing that one of the maids couldn't do."

John Squire sat down on the couch a little back of Martha, who seemed to rest more easily against his shoulder. Rosamond, forgetful still of her gipsy finery, knelt by her, still rubbing her hands.

"She'll be well taken care of, I can see that," said the doctor, smiling. "And now you can go down

and get the cot as your liege lady orders, John."

Rosamond looked startled, for as John Squire rose she saw him colour as hotly as she could have done herself. His skin was so very white where it was not ruddy that when he changed colour it showed as if he had been a woman. But the doctor, who was an exceedingly busy man, went on giving directions on his own account, and hurried off. Squire, who naturally knew a good deal about the twists and turns of his own late bungalow, went down cellar without more words than a brief good-bye to the doctor, brought up the cot for Martha, carried it to its destination and set it up efficiently.

"If you'll stay by Martha now, I'll make it up," suggested Rosamond, and went up-stairs for bed-covering while he took up his old position on the couch.

It was not until she had the sheets and blankets in a high pile in her arms, and was carrying them precariously down-stairs, that she thought to wonder what the doctor had meant, when he made John Squire blush so. He had assumed that — good gracious, but that was nonsense! And it was probably pure imagination anyway. That doctor couldn't have meant anything of the sort, and if he did he was crazy.

"It's ridiculous," said Rosamond aloud with her own cheeks scarlet, spilling two pillows and a blanket in the agitation of her feelings.

"What is?" asked Mr. Squire, laying Martha gently back and coming over to pick up the pillows.

"Nothing," said Rosamond.

"No, of course not," he said hurriedly, and they both coloured again. "Just now the principal thing is to keep Martha quiet and comfortable," he added hastily. "I'm sorry to have to turn your house into a hospital. It is the worst aggression on your rights yet, isn't it? But it will have to be so for a few days."

"Why, of course it will!" responded Rosamond quickly. "I'll love taking care of her. Please —" she hesitated a moment, "it would be rather a comfort to prove to you that I wasn't — well, such an absolutely insane person as you think."

"Mr. Squire smiled at her over the pillows, and actually began to quote poetry.

> "Oh, woman, in thine hours of ease,
> Uncertain, coy and hard to please —"

he began half-teasingly.

Rosamond finished it for him before she thought, in the good old college way:

> "But seen too oft, familiar with thy face
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace!"

and could have bitten her tongue off. It was too much of a piece with what that horrid doctor had been hinting, and bold besides. This was no way to

make an impression of meekness and serviceability! But Mr. Squire only smiled again.

"Exactly," said he, and carried the pillows in for her.

He certainly *had* declared a truce! So she made up Martha's bed swiftly while he watched, and then asked him to carry Martha in.

He lifted his housekeeper, who was breathing easily again, and carried her through to the "little room back."

"Is this going to be convenient?" he stopped to ask when he had laid Martha gently on the cot. Rosamond, who was kneeling behind it arranging the covers, looked up and nodded brightly.

"The door through to the kitchen makes it easy to have things carried to and fro," she said. "We can keep the door between this and the living-room closed, so that the noises we make won't bother her."

"But this is the room you and Allie use for your dining-room, isn't it?" he asked.

"We can have our meals in the living-room perfectly well," she said. "We do half the time anyway."

"It is very kind of you," he said again, and bent over Martha to ask her how she felt.

"Pretty well now," Martha answered. "Nice and easy. I think I could sleep a bit."

He turned and took up the little table bell which, as there was no one to ring it for, always stayed on

the sideboard. He set it on a chair by Martha, got her a glass of water, and then kissed her — all quite naturally and quietly.

Rosamond had never seen him indoors for more than a few minutes at a time; never at all when he was moving about doing things. She had somehow become possessed of the idea that he would be clumsy inside a house. There was such an unmistakable air of outdoors and big spaces about him. But here he was, looking after Martha as deftly and efficiently as Rosamond herself could have done.

"We'll leave you to sleep a little now," he told Martha. "If you want anything, ring the little bell and some one will come."

"Thank you, my dears," said Martha drowsily.

They went back to the living-room, and Mr. Squire sat down on the "other settle," as Rosamond always called to herself the one she and Allie never used. The fireplace was empty. The rain was still falling, and it was cold enough to have made the heat of a fire a comfort, if there had been any.

John Squire looked thoughtfully at the andirons.

"There ought to be a fire here," he observed. "I'll make you up one in a minute."

Rosamond sat down on her settle and said "thank you" with a matter-of-factness equal to his. He took the wood out of the fire-box without further comment, and had a fire blazing comfortably before he said anything more.

"But I wasn't thinking about the inconvenience for Martha," he said as if he had broken off the conversation at just that point the moment before. "It was the inconvenience to you I meant. Of course I'll send two of the maids over, one to look after Martha and one for the work, but it's going to be a worry for you at best. When Martha has these attacks she sometimes has to keep still for a week or ten days. And I'll have to be coming in and out a lot. I'm really exceedingly sorry."

Rosamond glanced up at him and laughed irrepressibly.

"You've managed to establish Martha here as resident chaperon in spite of me, haven't you?" she said mischievously. "Now don't explain," as he began to speak, "'never explain and never confess,' as the Advice to the Lovelorn says. I know perfectly well that you didn't tell Martha to have a heart-attack on purpose. And I know that its happening this way worries you lots more than it does me. Indeed —" she laughed a little again —"indeed it's rather nice to have some one here to pet. Allie is getting to be so well brought up that she doesn't need a thing. Good gracious, it's almost six, and where do you suppose that child is? I'd forgotten all about her in the excitement of looking after Martha."

"Over at my house," said he. "At least I'm tolerably sure of it. She came in with the dogs this afternoon, when she told me your people were over

here. She asked if she might stay and watch the cook do something or other, and Martha said she might. She's doubtless there still."

"Oh, then it's all right," Rosamond answered, sinking back relievedly. She had half sprung up in her anxiety.

"And now," said he, relaxing a little too, "for arrangements."

He leaned back on the settle in a way that suggested that he fitted it precisely.

"You look as if you and the settle had been built to match each other," observed Rosamond irrelevantly. It was getting dusk, and she could just see him, a Rembrantesque effect of shadows and fire-reflected high lights.

"I'm much the settle's senior," he answered, stretching out his hand and arm along the settle's back, "but I suppose it's an affectionate article of furniture, and still remembers its old master. I sat just where I'm sitting now most of my evenings for three winters."

The fire flared high and lighted up both their figures for the moment, Rosamond's slim, fantastic gipsy-guise, and John Squire's broad shoulders and strong, intent face, bent down a little, and a little smiling, as if he were contented.

They were both still for a little while; a silence wherein they felt at peace with the world and each other.

"You said something about arrangements," Rosamond reminded him presently.

He sat straight with a little laugh, as if he were coming back from some sort of a daydream.

"So I did," he assented. "I was going to say that the maids had better stay here at night, or at least Dora, who will do the nursing. Annie will do the housework. She can sleep here or at home as is most convenient for you. They're both good girls, and I think I can promise that they'll be as little trouble as possible under the circumstances."

"They won't be any trouble," she answered emphatically. "To be frank with you, the idea of somebody washing all my dishes for the next ten days is almost too beautiful to contemplate without tears. If I hadn't had Allie to set an example to, I should have done the way men do long ago; used up every dish in the house and then fled and hired a woman to do them all at once!"

"I'm glad Annie can be that much use to you, then," he answered relievedly. "And about Allie, don't you think she might as well stay over at the house till Martha is better? She's attached to Martha, but for that very reason she might be in the sick-room too much for Martha's comfort."

Rosamond might have flared up at this if she had been in a flaring mood, but she wasn't, and it struck her as a plain statement of fact, and a very sensible

one. She merely inquired if he thought the dogs had better stay there too.

"The bloodhound if you like," he said, and they smiled mutually, as they always did at the remembrance of the day of the bloodhound's introduction. "But unless the little dog is in your way here —"

"In my way?" she cried. "My heart's broken if he's out of my sight an afternoon. He always sleeps on the foot of my bed. I was thinking of Martha."

"That's all right, then," he said. "And now I'll go and send over the maids. I suppose you would like to see Allie to-night and give her your orders — and probably her clothes?"

"Yes, please," she said, getting up as he did. "And — Mr. Squire!"

He turned back, nearly at the door.

"What is it?"

Rosamond came over to him, an uncertain, flashing figure in the firelight, with the red reflections of the flame on her ornaments. There was a soft clash of bangles as she moved.

"Hadn't we better bury the hatchet for a little while, please? If you can just pretend that I never did anything you disapproved of, and I'll pretend — whatever needs to be pretended on my side," she finished, remembering that if she specified anything particular *she* had to forgive, there might be an

argument, and the hatchet hopelessly hurled above ground again.

He held out his hand to her.

"Very gladly," he said.

She laid her hand in his, that live, gay little warm hand that could almost say things all by itself.

"Then come back to supper," she said unexpectedly. "You'll be lonesome having yours all alone, wondering how Martha is. And I won't believe in the hatchet-funeral till you do."

She expected him to argue, but no argument appeared to be necessary.

"Thank you!" he said, and went out smiling.

"Well, he has certainly been an angel of light this afternoon!" said she, tiptoeing softly back to see if Martha needed anything she could give her.

She found the old woman awake, but feeling very quiet and comfortable. She went upstairs and got night-things for her, and had her comfortably settled for the night in a few minutes. Then at last she remembered her own wild attire, and ran up again to change it. She might have to be up quite late, so it was worth while, she thought.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

NIGHT WATCHES

SHE put on the demure little grey dress that she had used to give Jim Mattison an impression of sedateness, apron and all. Then, finding that she still had time on her hands, she went down and began to get supper (or it might have been dinner, she wasn't sure which yet) herself. She should have been very tired, but something, a queer exhilaration or excitement, was keeping her up. She felt as if she never wanted to rest again.

"There's some point to getting meals for somebody besides just Allie and me," she mused. "I suppose it's always more interesting, cooking for a man. I wish I knew how much seasoning he likes."

But there was no way of finding out, except the not to be thought of one of waking Martha, so all Rosamond could do was to make the cream of celery soup and the potatoes au gratin the way *she* liked them, and postpone the chops and salad-dressing till the eater of the meal came back. It seemed rather a long wait. It was fully eight, and very dark and rainy, before her door flew open and John Squire

strode in dripping and dishevelled. Behind him came the maids, Annie and Dora.

"Rosamond, we can't find Allie anywhere!" he exclaimed, forgetting to use the prefix in his excitement. "I've been hunting the child ever since I left, and so has Williams. We've been down to Mrs. Simmons' and up the road in the other direction for three miles. I've ransacked the house. I didn't want to worry you if it could be helped. But she's lost. Have you any idea where she might have gone — her usual haunts, I mean?"

For a moment Rosamond's heart sank. But Mr. Squire, standing there with the beads of rain on his tossed black hair, and the worried frown on his forehead, looked as if he needed cheerings up much more than he did lamentings. So she answered cheerfully, though she was alarmed herself.

"She's a self-reliant little thing, and if she's lost she very likely knows the way home from where she's gone. She may only be mislaid. Let me think. . . . And don't worry about her. You have enough to trouble you without bothering about my orphan — poor little darling!"

She stood and thought quietly for a moment, while the maids, competent middle-aged persons, went quietly about their several duties. She looked up in a moment.

"Did you telephone Dick Jerrold's hotel?" she asked.

"No, by Jove, I didn't!" said he, going to the telephone. "She's as likely to be there as anywhere."

He got Richard, and inquired briefly for the lost lamb. "Good!" Rosamond heard him say in a voice of relief. . . . "By nine? Certainly, that's good of you. . . . Yes, the bungalow."

"Is she there?" demanded Rosamond anxiously.

"Yes," he said, "the little monkey! Walked in an hour after you'd gone, he says, and demanded to be allowed to tell fortunes too! He cut that short, but just then there was no one to send up with her, so one of the women there took charge of her. He'll bring her and the dog up in about an hour."

"Oh!" cried Rosamond, "I'm so g-glad!" and proved it by dropping on the settle and beginning to cry.

He was over by her in an instant.

"Miss Rosamond — Rosamond, don't cry that way! It's all right, the child's safe, and she'll be here shortly. There's nothing to feel badly about. Please don't cry."

He laid his hand on her shoulder in his distress. The touch felt comforting, and Rosamond, between words and touch, pulled herself together, found her handkerchief and dried her eyes. She hoped she hadn't cried enough to do much damage. She was lucky enough to be able to cry moderately without showing it badly.

"I don't think it was any one thing," she explained. "But this has been a — well, rather a field day. You see, there was Cousin George; and the fortune-telling was rather tiring, so much at a stretch. And I was a little frightened about Martha. Then Allie on top of it all, though it was only for a few minutes I was worried — you're *very* thoughtful — and — oh, where's Darling?"

"Darling?" he echoed perplexedly.

"My little doggie you gave me," she explained with a touch of embarrassment. "I called him that because he was. Where is he?"

"The spaniel? Annie brought him in that basket she carried," Mr. Squire reassured her. "I thought you knew. She carried him out with her to the kitchen."

"Oh, thank you!" said Rosamond, and remembered that there was a mirror, too, in the kitchen. "Do you want to straighten up a little before we have supper?" she suggested. "There's everything for that in the guest-room, the one on the west end."

"That's my own old room," said he unexpectedly. "I expect I do look like the deuce."

He didn't. He was rather better-looking than usual, with his curly black hair tossed and damp, and a general air of being unbent about him; even if he did have mud on one cheek and all across his shoulder.

"You're rather nicer when you look like the deuce," dared Rosamond over her shoulder as she

slipped into the kitchen. "I'm not so afraid of you."

She heard him running up the stairs, and thought he had a very quick, light step for such a tall man.

Out in the kitchen, she found, there was nothing for her to do but to pat her hair a little, and commend Annie. Dora, who was a rather pretty Irishwoman, was just arranging a tray to be taken in to Martha, and Annie was putting a little more salt in the soup.

"Thank you," said Rosamond. "I was going to ask you about that. You may serve the meal directly now."

Annie, who seemed disposed to like her, smiled and said she would. And Rosamond, after a word with Martha, went back to wait for Mr. Squire.

He was down in a few minutes, his ordinary immaculate self, except that hard brushing hadn't quite conquered the tendency of his still damp hair to lie straight. It still waved so much that a little push would have made it curl again. Rosamond liked curly hair, and only the shades of all her well-brought-up ancestors kept her from giving it the push.

"Did you find everything you wanted?" she asked.

"Everything," he replied gravely, "even a box of pink powder and a package of shell hairpins. They are improvements since my day."

"Oh, aren't truces nice!" cried Rosamond irrelevantly, her whole face flashing into a smile.

"Dinner is served," announced Dora, who had evidently considered herself appointed to do the waiting.

"And you must be starved," said Rosamond, sitting down at the table. "I know I am."

"Yes," he acknowledged as he took the place opposite her. "And — I quite agree with you. Truces *are* nice."

Neither of them said much more for a little while, because it was late, and they were both unfeignedly hungry. It was not until Dora had been summoned (by rapping on a glass with a knife, because Martha had the bell) and had taken away the soup and brought in the dinner (it turned out to be dinner after all) that they began to talk again. Rosamond, over the soup, had been looking furtively at her companion and meditating on the strangeness of things in general and life in particular. The day before she had been feeling very wronged at John Squire, and he very wronged, to put it mildly, at her. And here they were to-night, hunting the same lost child, united in nursing the same Martha, and sharing their evening meal most amicably together!

"I suppose we ought both of us to hold malice better," she reflected, and eyed Mr. Squire again.

He was apparently in a brown study, with his eyes on the peas on his plate.

"They're self-coloured," she explained. "They're peas out of pods. I don't know why they're so dread-

fully green, but it's their natural complexion. I wouldn't think of having the canned kind this time of year. Grand-Uncle Alvin never let me —"

"I wasn't thinking about peas," he returned. But instead of being a little fretted, as he usually was by her attacks, he smiled. "I was thinking how strange it was that you and I were at swords' points yesterday — and here we are to-night, getting on as peacefully as possible. I believe we could do it for quite an indefinite time, with a little effort on both sides." He spoke quite gravely, looking at her while he spoke with an expression she did not quite understand. It was very intent.

But she took what he said quite simply.

"Why, how curious!" she answered brightly. "I was just thinking that, too."

His face lightened as if she had said something very wonderful.

"Were you?" he said eagerly. "Were you, Rosamond?"

She smiled and nodded. The idea that she and the Squire were close enough to each other in thought to have been thinking the same things was a surprising one.

"I don't believe I could stand on my rights to-night, even if I had any," she said plaintively, with a little demure smile. "I'm too dreadfully tired. More bread?"

"No, thank you," he answered. "Would you

mind telling me something?" he went on more lightly. "Will you tell me why you started toward me when I came down, and lifted your hand as if you wanted to say something, or do something, and then didn't say it, or didn't do it. I'd rather know what you were thinking, even if it's unpleasant — if we are going to get on peacefully."

But he was not prepared to have Rosamond, instead of frowning, laugh and colour and shake her head.

"Won't you tell me?" he asked. "In you own favourite phrase — you see I'm beginning to act on it — there's no reason why not!"

Rosamond took courage. It was a challenge to her principles. But it was much harder to tell the truth than if it had been such a dark and disagreeable thought as he evidently credited her with.

"I —" she began, and stopped. "I —" she started again. Finally she made herself finish. "I just wanted your hair to be crumpled up again, the way it was when you came in out of the rain," she said defiantly. "It looked — much more becoming. It was all curly, and you've worked at it till it's almost as neat as usual."

He looked surprised first, then he smiled, and finally laughed out like a boy.

"And I thought you were devising some new insult!" he said. "Miss Anne Rosamond — wasn't that what your people called you? — I certainly beg

your pardon. As you justly remark, it takes management to get it neat, but —" he smiled and thrust his hand backward through his thick hair —" it's a small thing to do for a lady I've practically put out of house and home."

"I didn't know you could act this way, or talk this way either," she said in impulsive admiration. "Why — you're *splendid* to be friends with! . . . But you haven't it right yet."

He rose and went over to the mirror hanging between the windows, and inspected himself with attention.

"I didn't know exactly what effect you wanted, you see," he said, eyeing himself in the glass gravely.

Rosamond got up too, and stood behind him and looked. It had never come to her before, but when Mr. Squire smiled he was handsome. He had square, perfect white teeth and lips that looked unexpectedly kind when they relaxed a little.

"Show me," he asked, wheeling.

He certainly had turned into a very different person.

"There must have been some magic spell in the chops," went though her mind. But "Why not?" she thought next. "Next week we'll be disapproving of each other again. We really ought to be as much friends as we possibly can be while we *are* friends."

So she reached up and gave his still damp hair the

right kind of push — a little gingerly, because she had never touched a man's hair before. And as John Squire was six feet one and a half, and she was a mere scant five-feet-eight, she had quite a little way to reach up. But she persevered, though her cheeks burned; and Squire, standing still with the little smile yet on his face, was exemplarily patient.

"There!" said Rosamond in triumph, standing back to view her handiwork, which *did* make her victim more picturesque, if not so neat.

"Is that the way you like it?" he asked doubtfully, and looked in the glass again with a serious brow.

"Don't touch it," warned Rosamond, stepping forward and laying three fingers on his arm to emphasise her command.

And it was then that Allie pushed open the door and raced in, followed by Jerrold and the bloodhound. What Jerrold saw, in view of what he had lately seen, was surprising. His last view had been of an angrily flushed Rosamond in gipsy-clothes, going unwillingly off with a John Squire who looked grim enough to make any girl unwilling to go. And here she was, gentle, domestic, soberly clad, and smiling up at John Squire with her hand on his arm. And Squire was smiling down at her with equal goodwill, and they had obviously been dining together, for their pushed-back chairs and used plates told the tale of a nearly-finished meal eaten in amity.

"Is the man a hypnotist?" wondered Jerrold within himself.

The last touch was given to the picture of home life when both man and girl turned to Allie, who rushed at them with the joy of one with nothing at all on her conscience. Rosamond hugged her forgivingly, while John Squire began to lecture her gently in a most paternal manner.

"May I come in?" inquired Jerrold, as a gentle hint that he'd like to be spoken to when they were quite finished with the dog and Allie.

"Oh, please do!" cried Rosamond, coming over and holding her hand out in welcome, while Allie still clung about her waist.

"Come in and have some dinner. Mr. Squire, please ring for Dora. She must think we've forgotten all about salad and dessert."

"So we had," said he placidly as he went to the table and beat on a tumbler as she desired.

"Do come have some dinner," Rosamond urged Jerrold again.

"I've had dinner, thank you," he answered politely. "So has Allie."

"I could eat some salad and dessert, though," suggested Allie herself, taking off her hat and sitting down. "So could Livy. All he had was just two bones."

Richard, too, sat down finally, and finished dinner with them.

"Martha's had a heart-attack and can't be moved," it occurred to Rosamond to explain as she served the dessert. "So her retinue is with me — Mr. Squire and two maids. I'm quite overwhelmed by the maids. Mr. Squire used to overwhelm me, but he doesn't any more."

She smiled over at him again sunnily. Indeed, just now, it is to be feared that Rosamond felt as if she owned the Squire. He had been so beautifully docile — and so human!

Richard expressed his sympathy suitably, and inquired if there was any way he could be of assistance. Then he went back home, after waiting ten minutes past dinner for manners.

"He seemed in a hurry," marvelled Rosamond. "Usually he stays quite awhile."

"Perhaps I should have gone —" began Mr. Squire, whose bright look had faded. You could see, now, that he was a little tired; and Rosamond remembered that he had some excuse to be. He had scoured the lanes for Allie, sitting there now at her dessert so peacefully, and with one thing and another had been hard at work on foot ever since he had carried Rosamond away from her fortune-telling.

"You're tired," she suggested gently.

"A little," he acknowledged. "But I'm afraid I'll have to be back here in about an hour, when Martha wakes again."

"Why on earth go?" asked Rosamond. "Lie

down here on the couch, and I can cover you up, and you can have a very nice nap. I'll call you the minute Martha wakens."

"Why, thank you, but I couldn't," he began; but Rosamond had been dictating to him all the evening with too much enjoyment to stop now.

"You could and you can," she said with decision. "Come now, don't be naughty, Master Johnnie," she added with a little gentle mischief.

The end of it was that he did lie down on the couch, and that Rosamond put a coverlet over him and swept Allie off upstairs. There she broke the news to her that she was to stay with Mr. Squire's remaining maids till Martha got better.

Allie made no particular objection. All she said was: "Mrs. Browne would be willing to look after me, down at the hotel. I like her ever so much. She's ever so ladylike. She liked me." She went on to give further details of the affection which had sprung up between her and Mrs. Browne, who seemed to have taken a strong liking to her. Mrs. Browne had said that she wished she had a little girl like her. And she had confided to Mrs. Browne that she was sure her mother had been a good deal like *her*.

"She always thinks whether a thing is ladylike or not before she does it," said Allie, with her blue eyes wide-open. "Think of that!"

"I am," answered Rosamond cheerfully, packing clothes busily in her own suit-case. "I am also

thinking of the superiority of heredity to environment."

"What's those?" asked Allie.

Rosamond laughed.

"Well, my darling, environment is Mrs. Simmons and Rosamond Gilbert. And heredity *must* have been a mother who asked the minister if it was proper to die before she dared do it."

But this was so far over Allie's head that she only slipped her little hand in Rosamond's, with one of her sudden bursts of affection, and said, "I love you, Auntie!"

Which made Rosamond rather ashamed of herself for saying things that Allie couldn't comprehend.

They tiptoed downstairs, and the little girl was sent off with Annie, who was to come back in time to get breakfast on the morrow. Rosamond hoped devoutly that she hadn't robbed Squire of all his servants, but she hardly knew how to ask about it.

At just about ten-thirty Martha's bell rang. Dora could be heard crossing the kitchen to her, but Rosamond, sitting beside the fire with her eyes half-shut, saw that John Squire slept on. It seemed too bad to waken him, but she knew he wanted it. She took time to wonder, standing above him, just how old he was. He looked so curiously young lying there asleep. But then, she remembered, most people do. His thick black brows were relaxed, instead of being a little knit, as they usually were. She knew by this

time that it was only a mannerism, but still it gave him a look of authoritativeness that was gone now. And his heavy black lashes were shut down over the grey eyes that "looked through you and buttoned up in the back," as Rosamond described it irreverently to herself. The mouth that closed in such a straight line when he was awake was relaxed a little, too. There was a sweetness in his face that she had never realised before was there, besides the decision, and the look as if he meant to have his own way. Or perhaps it was the way he had been acting that night that made her feel as if he was really young. He had been so belonging, somehow. Neither Jerrold, with all his boyish, self-centred high spirits, nor Sydney, with her angry hunger for freedom, seemed as much her own kind of people as the big black Squire whose automobile she had commandeered so relentlessly, with the superiority of youth to middle age, when she first came a-dream-realising to Wanalasset.

"I wonder why?" said Rosamond.

As she stood and watched him, and felt a little sorry for him somehow — he looked so much as if he hadn't been petted for a long, long time! — his eyes flew open, and he looked gravely up at her.

"Mother always waked me that way," he said drowsily.

"You're not quite awake yet," she answered hurriedly. "Martha just rang for Dora. You said you wanted to be called."

She felt that he was speaking more intimately than he would if all the barriers of full awakening were up.

He flung off the covering and stood up, fully awake now.

"Thank you," he said, and went in to see Martha.

Rosamond sat and waited. Presently he came out again, said good-night, and went home. For a moment Rosamond felt a queer, blank sensation, as if somebody who lived there had gone away. Then she shook herself, laughed, locked up and went to bed, after the hardest day she had known since her grand-uncle's death.

Martha seemed all right next day, so far as could be told. But the doctor, coming briskly in at about ten, reiterated his orders that she mustn't be moved.

"Would you mind, Miss Rosamond, going over and seeing what the maids are at, some time this morning?" she implored piteously when the doctor's fiat went forth. "I don't know what will happen, with nobody to see to things but the cook."

Which reassured Rosamond a little concerning the staff left behind to look after Mr. Squire. Martha gave her directions enough for the cook and the chambermaids and the rest of the left-behind to have managed two dozen servants. But before she went she attended to something else. She shut all the doors and got Green's Corners on the telephone.

The clerk, Clarence Merritt, answered her, not Mattison by good luck. She was fairly certain that neither Mattison nor Sydney would have told each other how they came to be sent there, or at least that if Mattison had said anything Sydney hadn't. So she did not give her name, merely asked for Mr. Browne. She got him or her with very little delay.

"This is Rosamond," she announced, "and you can be just as noncommittal as you like at your end. But I want to talk to you about your stepmother."

"Oh, bother!" said Sydney. "Is she on my trail?"

(Clarence Merritt, behind her, murmured, "those city fellers certainly is the devil with girls!")

"No," answered Rosamond. "Only she's worried about you. She doesn't know I know anything about you, but she's coming over to be shown things in my crystal — my divining-crystal, you know."

"Yes," said Sydney. "Well, what then?"

"I wish you'd write to her," pleaded Rosamond. "You can post the letter from New York, easily enough. It seems too bad that she should feel badly about you when she really doesn't have to. Will you?"

"Oh, yes," said Sydney readily enough, but dispiritedly. "There's no reason why anybody who can be happy shouldn't be. I'll write to her."

"Aren't you happy?" demanded Rosamond in astonishment. "The last time you were here —"

"Yes, of course," broke in Sydney. "I'm very, very happy. But I'm going fishing right now — have to ring off. Sorry. I'll write Adeline to-night. 'By, Rosamond."

Rosamond hung up the receiver and went her way, pondering. Life seemed an uncommonly pleasant thing to her, right now. And why shouldn't Sydney be happy?

"But she didn't *sound* happy," she meditated, "and she never mentioned Mattison. And she was simply wild on the subject of joyous camaraderie between man and man, when she was here before. To be sure, Mattison may have been around. Still she could have spoken of him. . . . Well, I hope the next time she comes she won't increase Mr. Squire's belief that I'm a villain and a cut-throat — the wretch! I wonder what she's been doing since then with her free and happy man-life?"

"Since then" was nothing like as long and mournful a period as it seemed to Rosamond when she cast her mind's eye back over it. But while Rosamond had been having her Sydney-made difficulties with John Squire, Sydney's own lot, like the policeman's, had not been altogether a happy one. There are drawbacks even to life in khaki trousers and short hair.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

COURTING AND KHAKI

SYDNEY, on that exciting day on which Rosamond had last seen her, had tramped her eight miles back to Green's Corners, gaily. There awaited her a happy home, shared on terms uncommonly like domesticity, with the friend of her heart. There also awaited her enough housework to keep her energies pleasantly employed, and a good deal of peace and comfort generally. But there was something else in store for her that she hadn't planned for in the least.

She got home about eight o'clock, dusty, mussy, burnt browner than usual, but very cheerful. The store, except on Saturdays, closed at five. So Mattison, for whom she had been careful to provide a cold lunch before she left, should either be waiting for her alone on the little store porch, or lying on the sitting-room sofa in the dark. It was too warm for lights, especially as they used kerosene. She was about to send up a shrill call of "Hello-o! Mattison!" when she was stopped by a sound she knew.

Sydney had travelled widely and wearily. And the sound she heard now was one she had heard be-

fore on the moonlit decks of P. & O. liners, on Florida verandahs, in Egyptian deserts, in New York tea-rooms. There is no other sound like it, and none in the world did Sydney hate so violently — the sound of the giggle of Woman when she coquets with Man.

Sydney stiffened where she stood, and let her eyes get used to the darkness. Presently she made out the light spot that was Mattison's hair, and the bigger white spot that was some girl's dress. And she heard the girl say archly,

"Ain't you the greatest kidder, Mr. Mattison? I don't wonder the girls say they can't believe a word you tell 'em!"

"But I didn't mean to kid you," came Mattison's voice, slow and polite as ever, and a little dismayed. "I really meant it. You really have very pretty eyes, Miss Robbins. You asked me, you know."

Yes, and she had evidently come to make an informal evening call on him! added Sydney mentally. And he was telling her she had pretty eyes. And — she doubtless had. Sydney continued to stand still in the dark and listen, for people shouldn't exchange sentiments about eyes on a public road if they don't want to be overheard.

But some motion must have caught Mattison's eye, for he called out,—"That you, Sydney? Where've you been all this time, kid?" And Sydney had to come close and answer.

"Only down to Wanalasset to see a friend."

"Come along and sit down," urged Mattison as if he meant it. "You know Miss Robbins, don't you, Syd?"

"Really I must be going," insisted Miss Robbins, not getting up at all.

"Don't go," advised Sydney brusquely, "I'm going in."

And in she strode, down the passageway beside the store, and up the wide old stairs to her own room, where she flung herself across the bed, not at all man-fashion. Not that she cried. There was nothing to cry about. There was no reason why Mattison shouldn't make love to every village girl in Green's Corners, or let them make love to him, which seemed from what Sydney had heard to have been more the case in this instance. But it did seem unnecessary — unfair. It was all very well for Rosamond, down there by the lake, sitting and laughing and being pretty in the middle of her dogs and her men and her fairy-tale plans. Everybody liked Rosamond. But when all you ask is just one man-chum all to yourself — *all* to yourself — to have to share his society with inferior girls with giggles seems unnecessary.

"We were getting to be such good friends," thought Sydney forlornly. "When a man falls in love he's no good to his man-friends, no good at all. I know. . . ."

To be sure, one giggling Robbins girl didn't make a marriage, but — well, what right had she to be sit-

ting there in her silly best clothes and her silly perfume and her silly hat —

"Syd! Syd-nee!" called Mattison up the stairs. "Oh, kid, where are you?"

Sydney didn't answer.

The next thing was the hurried sound of Mattison clattering up the stairs, and his pounding on Sydney's locked door.

"Come on down and help me get some ginger-beer out of the ice-chest," he called. "I'm hungry enough to eat a customer. Thank goodness my caller's gone home."

It was ungallant, but it soothed Sydney immensely. She got up and went to the door, feeling better. Mattison thrust an affectionate arm into hers and pulled her along downstairs with him.

"Cut some more cheese, there's a good kid," he said, busying himself with the bread-knife, and producing beautiful, accurate slices as he talked. "Good Heavens, Sydney, I always thought you had a certain amount of sense, but to-night you hadn't the intelligence of a billy-goat. If you'd camped for a minute that Robbins girl might have gone home, and I'd have had my appetite quenched a half-hour sooner."

"She's a sweet young thing," Sydney allowed herself to say dryly as she obediently cut cheese. "Do you think she's likely to love you for yourself alone?"

Nobody likes to be reminded of a confidence he has

made in a "more dream-heavy hour than this." Mattison turned pinker than was necessary to the opening of bottles, and said "No," sulkily. He had confided that wish to Sydney one dusky evening when they were both fishing by moonlight, but he hadn't expected her to throw it at him this way. People who remind you of past confidences are the most irritating things on earth.

"That Robbins girl has designs on the store," he jerked out. "She thinks she could be happy —"

"With a gentleman like you?" ended Sydney, beginning to carry the food out to the porch, where they were given to eating such late suppers as this.

"Not a bit of it," answered Mattison grimly. "With a grocery-store, and me thrown in. It appears that a flourishing grocery in Green's Corners is equivalent to a million in New York. Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

Sydney giggled.

"Be grateful, old man," she advised. "Supposing the girl *had* been disinterested — adored you hopelessly for your charms, you know — like as not you'd have felt duty-bound to marry her, as a reward of virtue!"

"I don't know that I'd go as far as that," said Mattison cautiously. He pushed the tray across the bench at Sydney. "Have another sandwich," he invited cheerily, "and shut up."

So Sydney had another sandwich, and shut up, and her rebellious feelings were soothed for the time being.

But with a chum who is the young and agreeable owner of the village's best general store, a store well known to be clear of mortgages, one cannot expect exclusive possession. Trade was very, very much better during the scant hours Mattison was behind the counter than when Merritt, who was a family man with two children and a faded wife, officiated. The stock of notions and dress-goods, Sydney noted bitterly, had to be replenished quite twice as often as did such things as molasses and clothespins and starch and dog-collars, which are more generally wanted by the married and settled part of the population. As for the postoffice, Sydney thought seriously of having an apocryphal uncle present her with a horse and buggy, and delivering the mail once a day herself. But she couldn't give Mattison her real reason for wanting to establish the delivery, and when she suggested her expectations of the buggy and her philanthropic desire to be a postman, he opposed her, with his usual carefully thought out reasonableness. The villagers enjoyed coming after the mail more than anything else they did, he explained. In the absence of any other neighbourhood centre why deprive them of the club privileges of Sheppard's store?

"Old John Ricé has occupied the same barrel and

eaten the same crackers every day for thirty years," he told her. "You wouldn't want to wreck his happiness by making him change his habits now."

So Sydney gave up the idea of having her uncle die and leave her the buggy.

It was trying, though doubtless excellent, discipline to have to be very jealous with no loophole for saying so. But Sydney went resolutely on enjoying her manhood; though if she had stopped to think of it, her clothes were the only masculine thing about her life. She was engaged in that quite feminine occupation, cooking and keeping house for a man. The days had settled into a fairly regular routine. It grew to be a settled thing that at the end of the day she and Mattison should sit on the bench and talk till bedtime. Mattison's pipe kept off mosquitoes. Sydney never smoked, though it had been one of the things she had intended to do. Somehow she felt that she must not, and no matter how Mattison coaxed and lured with pipe and cigarette, she never did. She sat silent, generally, and let Mattison do most of the talking. The treetoads gurgled softly off in the distance, and the wind blew leafy and fresh and sweet from the woods beyond. Once in awhile a whip-poor-will would cry. You could hear the leaves rustle, and if you tipped your head back there were stars overhead. Altogether, on these nights, Sydney was sure that life was most satisfactory.

But it was on just as perfect a night as well might

be that Mattison, who had fallen comfortably silent, suddenly said, "Syd?"

"Yes," answered Sydney, with the quick response she always gave him.

"Syd, I don't believe you like girls any more than I do."

"I don't like them as much," she answered shortly, pushing her hand back through her crest of black hair. It was a little long by now, getting to have a most football effect, but Sydney rather liked it so. It was more becoming. "You'd like girls fast enough if you trusted them," she went on carelessly. "I couldn't get excited over any girl that ever lived, no matter how I tried."

Which was, naturally, quite true.

"Let's try," suggested Mattison out of a clear sky. "Look here, Syd, it's this way. I ought to get married. My people want me to, and I know I should. And — well, I told you. I can't get myself focused on a girl. They don't like me."

Sydney began an indignant protest, but he stopped her.

"No, they don't. You do — fellows do, once in awhile. But there's just something about me that girls don't like. And I'm not going to marry any of them because they want —" he grinned —"a good corner grocery business and a brick house. But we ought to make an effort, you and I. Not liking girls isn't normal, at our age."

Sydney leaned back in her corner and shut her eyes and thought. Suppose he knew, this blond, methodical, reasonable young man with the streak of desperate sentiment down the middle of him, that she, who cooked his meals and helped in his grocery for seven dollars a week, could have bought up his corner grocery and himself several times over! She knew he was a college man, for he had let that much out. But he had evidently sunk what money he had, out here in the woods and wilds. He had been rich once, of that she was certain. For one thing, he did not speak of "going to Europe," but of "crossing." And there is no surer criterion of money or not money than that. Only your millionaire "crosses," as unconcernedly as if he were dealing with a trip on a ferry-boat.

"Well, what do you want me to do about it?" she inquired flippantly. "Explain to Lorena Wilder and Maudella Robbins and the rest that you're really a charmer when they get to know you? They tag around enough as it is. Goodness knows what would happen if they had any more light on the beauties of your nature!"

"No, I don't mean anything of the sort," returned Mattison, ignoring her flippancy. "Don't be a young idiot. It's the other way round. I want to see if I can't discover *their* charms. They must have some. And if you go calling on a girl alone, hereabouts, everybody begins to ask you why you

don't marry her. I want you to come along with me for a round of calls."

"Oh, I say!" protested Sydney. "I hate calling on girls. And *I* don't see any reason why I should go round boring myself to death when I'd much rather be lying down reading, or out in the woods at night."

"I'd rather be in the woods myself," said Mattison a little wistfully. "They're much pleasanter than stuffy parlours. But I owe it to myself to try."

"I haven't any clothes," objected Sydney. But she might as well have talked to the tree-toads. When Mattison decided that he owed himself anything Sydney knew everything was over but meek acquiescence.

"Anyway, for goodness' sake don't start off right away," she pleaded, hoping he would forget about it if they delayed a little. "Let's have a night or so more of peace and comfort."

"I wasn't thinking of going to-night," said Mattison consolingly. "Come on down to the branch, and see if any of those moths we put goo on the trees for are there keeping their engagement."

Sydney rose cheerfully, and they strolled off arm in arm.

"You're a good kid, Sydney," observed Mattison. "It's funny how we've taken to each other. I don't think I've ever gotten as close up to anybody as I have to you, as long as I can remember. Not even

my chum at college. I feel as if — well, as if you and I'd belonged together since the world began."

"That's why you're trying to find a wife, and get rid of me, I suppose," Sydney answered in a muffled voice.

Mattison laughed.

"Good Lord, you answered like a girl," he said. "Get rid of you? Not much. I'd like to know why marrying — not that there's any immediate likelihood of it — should make me get rid of you, or you of me!"

"It would, that's all," said Sydney, still in a low voice. "And — well, Mattison, I wouldn't have you for a chum any more if you married Lorena or the rest of the happy villagers. I — I like you pretty well, too, old boy."

"Then no matter how much either of us gets married, we stay pals to the end of the chapter," said Mattison cheerfully. "Look out, kid, you'll be down over that stump."

Mattison's purposes were not much less unwavering than the Pyramids. Next night Sydney settled herself on the corner of the porch bench, with a sigh of tired relief at the chance to rest. It had been one of those unseasonably hot days which sometimes drop into the middle of June. So the meals had been rather more tiring to get than was ordinary, because the gas range had suddenly resigned, and

had to be replaced by the coal-stove. Also there had fallen to Sydney rather more work in the store than usual, because Mattison had made an unexplained expedition to the city after their midday meal, and hadn't returned till late, when he came back triumphantly with mysterious bundles. Besides that, Clarence Merritt's wife had been ill all the afternoon, which had temporarily removed him from the staff. So poor Sydney was quite unprepared for Mattison's cheerful "Come along, kid."

She didn't move.

"Come where?" she demanded, without looking up at Mattison, framed in the doorway. "I'm dead to the world, Jim Mattison. I wouldn't get off this bench to-night for all the whip-poor-wills that were ever whipped, or moths, or bullfrogs, or muskrats, or *any*thing."

"'Tisn't muskrats," said Mattison sweetly; "it's girls. Two of 'em. You and I are going hence to call on the Warren girls this beauteous night."

"You may be," said Sydney. "You act as if it was a pleasure exertion. I stay here and rest. To begin with, I left calling clothes out of my wardrobe when I came here."

"Knew you'd say that," responded Mattison, equably. "So I went off this morning —"

"— And left me all the storekeeping to do," interposed Sydney. "Mary Merritt was sick, and Clarence had to stay by her and look after her."

"Sorry, old man, but it's all for your good," said Mattison gaily. "I went, as I was saying when you interrupted, and got you some calling clothes."

"What?" exclaimed Sydney, aroused from her fatigue. "You didn't! I have every stitch I need."

"You haven't any silk shirts or any flannels," answered the unruffled Mattison. "I think I have your measurements right. Got you some."

"I didn't want them!" reiterated Sydney. But Mattison was one of those gentle and inflexible people who always get their own way over their stormier friends.

"They're a present," he pleaded. "I took a lot of trouble picking them out. Besides, you said you'd go."

Sydney had never wanted to do anything quite as little in her life as she wanted to dress and go courting with Mattison. But she had a confirmed habit by this time of doing everything he told her to. She rose wearily from the bench and went in with him.

"That's a good fellow!" said Mattison appreciatively. "Everything's dumped outside your door."

"Thank you," she said. She did not offer to pay for the clothes, because she knew her friend well enough to be sure that it meant a three-hours' argument with certain defeat at the end, and she was very tired. She stooped over the packages by her

door, unlocked it, and went in. There was dressing up to do here, too, it seemed, and there were calls. And there was somebody, apparently, who had to be obeyed; at least Sydney found herself obeying him. Yet she felt no impulse to depart, wronged as she was. She locked the door behind her, lighted the lamp and began to change her khaki trousers and blue cotton shirt for the fine, heavy white silk shirt and white trousers Mattison had brought her. Characteristically careful to the last detail, he had forgotten nothing. There were white silk socks and white buck oxfords, and even a silk scarf of a deep yellow, the one touch of colour. It was the very tone most becoming to Sydney's dark eyes and tanned face. She smiled over Mattison's carefulness as she opened the package that held it, and smiled at herself in the glass as she finished her toilet. She made quite a distinguished-looking youth. She found herself wondering how a heavy white crepe frock that fell away at the throat just that way, with a yellow girdle and perhaps a touch of the same colour at the wrist-ruffles, would become her. And woman-slippers, with high heels and perhaps buckles with topazes. And yellow silk stockings, and her hair done high with that old amber comb of her grandmother's in it —

She thrust her hand impatiently through the mop of black hair she had sacrificed so ruthlessly a month or so before —

"Oh, *dear!*" said Sydney Browne, despiser of woman's wear.

"Ready?" called up the relentless voice of Mattison, and she heard him running upstairs and halting outside her door. She picked up the round white felt hat, last item of Mattison's shopping, crammed it on her head and opened the door.

Mattison was bedecked, too. It appeared that he had brought beautiful clothes with him. He had on a Palm Beach outfit of superlative cut and fit, and looked exceedingly well.

"That's the boy!" said he. "That rig's becoming to you, kid. But — gee, you need a haircut! That's a regular football mop. The birds will be making nests in it."

But Sydney's back was against the wall.

"I won't go one step if I have to do anything more," she exclaimed. "I came here to the country to get rest and quiet, and to be rid of the trouble of dressing up and seeing stupid people that didn't interest me."

She tried to be severe, but she was conscious that she was only tremulous.

"Why, you poor kid, you *are* tired," said Mattison compunctiously. "I wouldn't have gone off that way and left everything on your shoulders, if I'd known about Clarence's wife. But as long as we're ready we'd better go. Here — wait a minute. That tie's wrong. You *are* a careless kid!"

He wheeled Sydney and did the yellow tie over again, while she stood meekly under his ministrations.

"That's not the way to wear that soup-basin," he went on. "Didn't you ever have one before? This way."

He replaced it the right way, and marched Sydney off. Strangely enough it never came to her that she was standing about eight times as much fussing from him as she ever had from her stepmother, and that she was accepting it as if it was a favour.

The operation of dressing had refreshed her a little, as it generally does a woman. The little walk with Mattison through the cool evening air was pleasant, too. But not so the call. The Warren girls, Emily and Ellabelle, owned a cool and comfortable porch, but this was a First Call, and as such the First Callers were not let out of the parlour. Emily, the older, took Mattison, and Ellabelle took Sydney, and both did their best to be charming.

It was rather fun for Sydney for a little while. She sat still, à la Americain, and let the girl do the work. Ellabelle was a nice little thing of about seventeen, with brown hair done in a lamp-mat over each ear, and a too-constant laugh that ended off all her sentences. But Sydney found her own eyes constantly straying to the other side of the room, where pretty blonde Emily was reading Mattison's palm

with little pattings and touchings and ripples of laughter.

"I can read gentlemen's palms, too," said Ellabelle coquettishly, as she saw Sydney watching the others.

"Let's go over and hear what Miss Emily's telling Mattison," suggested Sydney desperately, walking over, and forgetting to bring Ellabelle's chair along.

Ellabelle looked crestfallen, but she followed. Mattison was quite unmoved. He went on getting his palm read, and when he was through the sisters merely switched gallants. Sydney gave up any hopes of escape after that. She answered Emily as politely as she could, and took note mechanically of the furnishings of the room. She had read about shell flowers that lived in glass cases, but she had never supposed that they really existed. Neither had she known that people still had tidies, or put them on top of parlour organs. However, there were touches of modernity. Postcard albums, which Sydney hated with the viciousness of the easily bored, abounded, and Emily showed her three before they rose to leave.

In spite of his declaration that "girls did not like him" Mattison had managed to keep up a steady and flirtatious conversation with first Emily and then Ellabelle, and had given such a successful imitation

of enjoying himself, Sydney thought bitterly, that they had never brought a postcard album near him.

"They're nice little girls," said Mattison approvingly on the way home. "Nice and sincere. I liked the way that eldest one was dressed. A girl does look well in pretty, simple things like that."

"Yes," said Sydney.

In her mind she was swiftly reviewing Emily Warren's bright blue beads, her vivid pink lingerie ribbons that shone through her lavender dress, the cheap lace on her ruffles, the slazy lavender silk stockings above the black slippers that had never cost more than one-ninety-eight. And she thought about her own trunks, and the piles of handsome, carefully-chosen clothes that she had abandoned disdainfully in order to wear khaki trousers and tennis shoes, and — have freedom. And then suddenly Rosamond's last half-laughing words came into her mind:

"It isn't all going to be smooth sailing, even alone with the ducks. But if things seem crossways, just remember they really aren't. And then they really won't be when you've looked them over a couple of times."

She tried hard to remember that. And after all, what was wrong, except that she was jealous and wanted her chum all to herself? Men, she reminded herself, probably didn't feel that way. She was forgetting to feel like a man. "I'm turning out a regu-

lar porch-cat," she rebuked herself, and tried to tear her mind's claws from Emily's cheapnesses and shortcomings. After a minute she even managed a little laugh.

"They're both nice girls," she said. "Next time we go out I won't be so tired, and I'll cut you out, Mattison, see if I don't!"

"Do you want Emily?" asked Mattison in swift alarm; not for the loss of Emily, she found, but herself. "You're too young to go chasing after girls. Why, what would I do without you? I'll tell you, kid, we'll cut out this girl thing."

But Sydney had a grip on herself now.

"No, indeed," she said; "we'll keep on." But it doesn't do to be too noble. Sydney wished she hadn't said that, next day, because Mattison took her at her word, man-fashion, and began to plan more expeditions. He was annoyingly literal.

So after an evening alone for rest and refreshment they started on their quest again. This time it was the Robbins girl, and there was only one of her, so there was no question of pairing off.

Sydney, in spite of her bravado, made no effort to supplant Maudella in Mattison's affections. She found a post-card album without waiting to have it forced upon her, and stayed in the corner with it till Mattison saw fit to go. There was only one bright spot to that evening, and that was a large plate of excellent fudge which Maudella produced

about ten. Sydney's gloom didn't prevent her from having an appetite, and she ate it with enjoyment. But still, as she studied postcards from Niagara Falls and Asbury Park and Wildwood, and even one far-travelled one from California, she continued to eye Maudella Robbins' clothes. She had disliked the Warren girls, but Maudella she felt not so much antagonism to. The girl was of her own type, tall, thin, and with rather dashing dark good looks. But Maudella did what Sydney had never known how or cared to do: taken all her own good points and made the most of them. Her dark skin was thrown up by vivid colours, her brilliant eyes were emphasised a little more than they need have been, with a pencil, and her green dress, overtrimmed though it was, brought out her slimness effectively.

"I always tried to hide how thin I was," reflected Sydney, with a sigh for her own stupidity. Here in the backwoods was that formidable thing, a woman who knew how to dress.

But Sydney Browne was not dense. She sat and took notes for future reference. Some day, when all this was over and mercifully dulled, and Mattison keeping his grocery store with some artless village maiden's wifely aid, Sydney decided that she would go back to being just a girl again. Just for a little while, to see if she couldn't do it better now, with all the hints she'd picked up. For the little while that was left of the call on Maudella, Sydney was not un-

happy. She was engaged in planning herself evening clothes.

Time went on. Sydney grew, finally, almost hardened to the relentless round of calling Mattison forced upon her. They discussed the girls they went to see with a frankness that bordered on brutality, and Sydney's outlook on them helped Mattison a good deal, whether in the right or wrong direction, to see Woman as she is. The friendship grew closer and closer. It was the most wonderful and satisfying relationship Sydney had ever known, and the girls gradually became a very small part of it. Then one day Mattison threw another bombshell.

"What do you really think of Miss Robbins?" he asked casually while they lay on their backs in the fern one afternoon.

"Why, nothing special," Sydney answered. "She's rather cleverer than the girls hereabouts." Then she turned over to face him, startled by a peculiar note in his voice. "Are you thinking about — that?" she demanded.

Mattison nodded, as if he was answering a question about a meal, or an article of dress.

"That is, not seriously," he amended his assent. "Only wondering. You see, Syd, you can't expect to have a real friend in your wife, as far as I can see. These girls — I couldn't think alongside any of them, the way I do with you. But Maudella's

pretty, and the type I like best. And anybody who looked like you might be like you inside a little, too. It always works out that way after awhile, I think. . . . Wish you had a sister, kid."

"I haven't," said Sydney a little hoarsely.

"I know," he said. "Isn't it a nuisance? . . . I don't know why it is, but since I've been out here I've felt — well, it sounds foolish, but you always understand. You're not like any fellow I ever knew before."

Sydney laid a feverish hand on his wrist.

"Go on," she said.

He started.

"How hot your hands are!" he said. "Well, it's this: I want — somebody or other badly. Somebody who could give me all you could, and be a woman, too. Being with you, being chums this way, has made me see how I want it. I'm restless and unhappy and excited, and I don't know what it all is, but if I married Maudella perhaps — perhaps I could get her to be all I want.— Good Lord, kid, what is it?"

For Sydney had arisen, and was looking down on him with burning cheeks and a heaving bosom.

"What is it? Well, I'll tell you. . . . No. . . . I can't — Listen, Jim Mattison. If you're as fond of me as you say you are you'll do one thing I ask you without asking any questions. . . . Will you?"

"Certainly," said Mattison, getting up and fling-

ing an anxious arm about her shoulders. "Here, hold up, kid. You're sick or something."

"I'm not," she said, jerking violently away from him. "Don't touch me! . . . I'm going away, down to a house where a girl lives named Rosamond Gilbert, in Wanalasset. A white bungalow, at the third boat-landing. I want you to wait over one train, and then meet me there. I have something to say to you that I can't — oh, I can't tell you here. Will you?"

"Of course I will, or anything else you say," he said. "But, Sydney, you worry me. Hadn't I better go down with you?"

"No, no, no!" said Sydney, beginning to laugh hysterically. "No, you mustn't; you shan't!"

"Oh, all right," he said soothingly.

She clutched his coatsleeve with both hands.

"And for heaven's sake," she adjured him tensely, "don't say anything to Maudella Robbins till after you've been to Wanalasset!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

NIGHT WATCHES

TO return to Rosamond's part of the country, Martha improved very satisfactorily. In a couple of days she was so much better that there seemed a fair prospect of her being moved from Rosamond's by the end of the week.

So when Jerrold called up and told Rosamond that there was to be a grand Saturday night dance at his Mammoth, there seemed to be no reason why she should not go.

"I'll send Mrs. Woolman up to stay with her sister," said Richard, who seemed in an unusually thoughtful mood, "and Squire can bring you down."

"Mr. Squire?" asked Rosamond in a surprised voice. "His dancing days are over!"

She heard Richard laugh.

"They tell me he's one of the best dancers hereabouts," said he, "unless they were stringing me."

"Who?"

"A bunch of the Country Club fellows," Richard answered. "I managed to get away from my zoo long enough to go up there, the other night — to the Country Club, I mean. He belongs, and generally

goes to the dances unless he's travelling. I'd a great deal rather come for you myself, but I'm tied down by having to run things, you know."

"Of course," said Rosamond, "and I accept with wild pleasure. You'll probably have to dance with me a lot yourself, for I am positive Mr. Squire doesn't dance. I do hope," she added with swift fear, "they won't ask me to read their palms in the middle of a dance!"

"I told them that you were a friend of mine, not a professional at all," said Richard calmly, "and that you were doing it for a lark."

"And I suppose they said, like Yum-Yum, 'There, I knew it directly I heard her telling fortunes!'" answered Rosamond with a little laugh.

But Richard answered her soberly, and with a little sigh back of what she was saying. He did not seem as light-hearted as he had been. He gave her details about everything concerning the dance, and then rang off, still with the same little sigh.

"What do you suppose is the matter with the world?" she demanded of John Squire, who had appeared noiselessly behind her as she telephoned. He had gradually gotten into the habit of walking in without knocking, since they had been looking after Martha together. "Everybody is as sad as they can be," she went on with a fine disregard of grammar. "This is the second person in the client line who has talked to me over the telephone lately, and

acted as if life was fearful! And I think life's the nicest thing there is, don't you?"

"I've no complaints to offer right now," he answered buoyantly, as he went on his way to Martha's room.

"Oh, but wait," she called after him. "Richard Jerrold asked — he wants to have you bring me to a dance at his Mammoth Saturday night, and he says you dance!"

"I shall be very glad to take you," said he politely. "Yes, I dance. Did you think I was too old?"

Instead of being cross he seemed decidedly amused.

"Not exactly too old," she stammered, sacrificing a little truth to politeness. "I — I thought you might have been too busy with other things to — to bother with frivolities."

"Dancing's excellent exercise," answered Mr. Squire sedately, but still with that suppressed amusement. "Is it evening dress, do you know?"

"Flannels for the men and anything you please for the girls," answered Rosamond; "at least that's what he said."

"Very well," her interlocutor answered, and went on into the room beyond.

Rosamond had a good deal to do, for the supervision of two housefuls of servants is a thing which takes time, be the servants ever so well trained. But she wasted quite a while merely standing still and

wondering. The combination of her big, dignified Squire and dances at the Country Club seemed nearly an impossible one. But Saturday was not far off, so she awaited developments with interest. She determined that she would look as pretty as she could, by way of celebration, at least. There would be no harm in that whether the Squire could dance or not.

When Saturday night actually came she dressed herself with an excitement she could not account for. She had been to dances enough back in East Warren. To be sure, she had never been to a big dance at a hotel, and Grand-Uncle Alvin had always managed to worry at her for the last two hours before she went, which rather takes your mind off being happy. And there was nothing here to worry about, nothing at all. From her frock to her shoes, everything was as suitable and becoming as could be. Perhaps that was why going seemed such a wonderful event.

With a heart that was still beating swiftly she went in to show herself to Martha. Martha and she were getting to be very fond of one another these days.

"Now, don't tire yourself out, dear," Martha counselled from her pillows. "You must be tired already, with all you have on your shoulders."

"Not a bit," laughed Rosamond, swinging her white silk skirts a little and taking an experimental dance-step or so. She looked anything on earth but

tired. But . . . that was why she felt so excited, she was sure. She must be tired, whether she felt so or not. She went out into the sweet summer night air, and threw herself into the corner of the swing-seat, waiting. It was not very long.

"Ready, Rosamond?" asked John Squire's voice from the dark. It was not moonlight this week, and all she could see was a dim glimmer of something tall and white standing below her.

"Quite ready," she said with an excited little laugh, and rose and came down to him. He reached out and took her hand to guide her down the steps, and held it, to pilot her through the dark of the little wood. He did not speak, and it made her feel a little pleasurably frightened, some way. It did not seem like her familiar John Squire, somehow. For one thing, she had never seen him in any but dark clothes before. If he had worn conventional evening dress it would have seemed natural and fitting. She hoped he wouldn't look very incongruous. She wanted him to look as well as he possibly could, which was exceedingly well indeed. But there was no chance to see till they got down to the hotel, it was so dark. She did not worry — she thought she could trust him to look immaculate, anyway. They drove through the streets scarcely speaking at all, but it was not an awkward silence. It seemed rather as if it was better than talking.

"How pretty you look!" he said as they mounted

the steps of the hotel together. It was almost the first thing he had said. They were a little late, and she could hear the violins playing within. She looked up at him to smile a response. But her smile checked itself halfway. For this tall gentleman in white who was looking down on her as if she was the most beautiful thing on earth wasn't her John Squire at all. This was an entirely new person, a handsome young man. And it was a long breath before Rosamond realised what had happened. It was all in the loss of those little black whiskers that she had first hated and later forgotten about. It made the most amazing difference; narrowed his face, for one thing; and the expression of formality was entirely gone. His eyes had always been wonderful, Rosamond reminded herself, and his features good. But the change —

John Squire flushed a little under her stare, but he smiled back serenely.

"It occurred to me this morning as you were telephoning," he explained, "that you and Jerrold regarded me as a patriarch of forty-five or so, and the reason. The forty-fiveness explained, too, some things in your attitude that had been a little puzzling. It seemed a useless mistake, so I took the quickest way to correct it. The world at large may get to regard me as fit for the grave, too, and it might become annoying in time."

"But — but — you're *not* old!" stammered

Rosamond, unable to take her eyes from his strong, smooth-shaven face, which had lost ten years by the change.

"But you thought so, didn't you?" he persisted.

"I — how old *are* you?" she brought out desperately.

"I shall be thirty-three on the seventeenth of October next," he responded with his characteristic carefulness.

Rosamond gasped, not for the first time in their acquaintance. . . . And he really looked not one day older than he said.

"Were you *always* only thirty-three?" she demanded fiercely.

He steered her gently up the steps, where she might have stayed for some time, for she had forgotten where she was in her surprise.

"Oh, no," he explained pleasantly. "Last year I was thirty-two, and the year before that thirty-one, and —"

"You're teasing me," she interrupted.

"Ladies' dressing-room to the right," chanted a bell-boy, standing in their way and showing a desire to part them. "Gentlemen to the left."

"I don't suppose there are any programmes. We might as well dance this," he said as she came back to him from the dressing-room, and they passed into the ballroom together. In another moment they were gliding down the room, and Rosamond was dis-

covering that the Country Club men had spoken the truth. John Squire was a perfect dancer.

"I do hope I have most of my dances with you!" she said. "Why, you're one of the best dancers I ever met!"

He smiled a little, as if he were pleased with her saying that.

"Did you think I never did anything but stay at home and feed the dogs?" he said. "I think you said something to that effect once."

"N-no," said Rosamond. "I knew you put in a good deal of time bringing up such young women as strayed your way."

"I never meddled with one before in my life," he answered fervently.

Then they both fell quiet, for Rosamond was remembering that Mr. Squire must still despise her at heart, after all, for having been kissed by Sydney. What he was thinking himself at that moment nobody knows, for his expression never gave the least hint of what was going on inside of him.

They finished the dance silently, and they were seeking a veranda by common consent when Richard appeared and caught them.

"Here! you can't sneak off that way when there are scarcely enough men to go around as it is," he said. "Besides, I want to dance with Miss Gilbert."

The two men stood together talking, and Rosamond watched them both. She wondered why it was

that Jerrold, with his beauty and his slim grace, seemed somehow put out by John Squire. Squire was taller, but it wasn't that exactly. It was — well, it was the difference between a bass and a tenor note on an organ. She could get no nearer it than that. And then, of course, a man with such vivid colouring — "all red and white and black like a court card," she remembered thinking when she first saw him — had the advantage over a fair, pale man like Dick, as far as impressiveness went.

"You're awfully quiet," said Dick just about as she thought of him, turning to her. "What are you thinking about?"

"The music," she answered. "The difference between bass and tenor notes."

"We might as well use it," he said, and swung into the dance with her. He danced well, too, yet somehow differently. It didn't seem a bit like the first dance she had had — stupid, almost, by comparison.

"I never realised what a good looker Squire was before," he said presently.

"Isn't he?" answered Rosamond with sparkling eyes.

"I wanted to ask you something about him," he went on.

But he did not ask it, at least not then, because straight through the dancers Squire himself was coming toward them.

"Stand out a minute, please, Jerrold," he said. "I want to speak to you for a moment."

"The eternal summons!" half laughed, half fretted Rosamond. "It's that man's life work, finding out what I'm doing and then telling me to stop it."

"They just called me up from the bungalow," was what Mr. Squire had to say, "and Martha's worse again. I think I had better go back to her. You need not, Miss Rosamond. I'm sorry to have to hurry away, Jerrold, but I'll send the car back for Miss Gilbert. I know you'll see that she has a good time."

"I'll see to that myself," said Rosamond unexpectedly. "I'm going with you. There may be something I can do."

And in spite of all the protests the men could make, she proceeded to have her own way.

"This is Dora's night out," she reminded Mr. Squire when they were speeding back together. "Martha's sister may want somebody to run errands or something like that. I'd feel dreadful to be dancing."

"It's like you," said Mr. Squire briefly.

"Not a bit like me!" she said with a little laugh. "It's simply that I'm very fond of Martha, and I want to do anything I can for her."

"You're —" he began, and then stopped. Men seemed to be saying a great many things to her tonight and then breaking off.

They found the doctor already there when they arrived, and Martha better. But it proved to be a very fortunate thing that Rosamond had elected to come, for Martha was a little flighty, and her restlessness took the form of wanting both Rosamond and John Squire in the room with her continuously. She fretted if either was out of her sight for an instant, even to get her something.

"We'll have to watch with her all night, I'm afraid," Squire said in an undertone to Rosamond. "I'm sorry; it will tire you."

"No more than dancing the night through would, nor as much," she answered with a little smile, laying aside her cloak and sitting down, just as she was, to begin her vigil.

Martha dozed a little at intervals, but she kept starting awake and looking around for them.

"You're sure you brought her back with you, Master Johnnie?" she asked several times restlessly. "You didn't leave her down there with him, did you?"

"No, dear, no," he would answer soothingly, and she would be quiet for a little.

"What is it?" Rosamond whispered. "Is she delirious?"

"I'm afraid she's not quite herself," he answered in the same tone. "You know some people become delirious very easily. It needn't worry you. She talked this way one night before. She has an idea

that — well, that Jerrold's very fond of you, and she doesn't approve of it. It's only because she's ill this way, and has fancies."

Rosamond flushed.

"I see," she said. "See, Martha, I'm here. Nobody's going to take me away from you."

"That's right, Miss Rosamond," Martha answered drowsily, seeming satisfied and dozing again.

"I'm a little worried about her," Mr. Squire whispered. "It's all very well to reassure her about things she *can* be reassured about, but she's quite as likely to fret because she wants to see her husband. And as he's been dead a matter of twenty years, I couldn't produce him very easily. And then her heart would commence going badly again."

"Did anything like that ever happen?" asked Rosamond softly.

"Yes, and she nearly died. She took it into her head one night, when she was having one of the attacks, that I was a small boy again, and lost. Nothing I could do would persuade her that I was with her, or of my identity with her 'Master Johnnie.' You see, she strained her heart getting me out of a river when I was small, so naturally I have to do everything I can to look after the consequences."

"I think you do everything you can for everybody anyway," she answered impulsively, forgetting in the half-light that he was the young and good-looking man she'd been feeling a little less well ac-

quainted with all the evening. "I think you're the best man that ever lived!"

But she forgot, in her enthusiasm, to hold her voice down, and its sound woke Martha from her feverish doze.

"Miss Rosamond, dear, you aren't quarrelling with Master Johnnie, are you?" she asked.

"No, no, indeed, Martha," Rosamond reassured her. "Are we, Mr. Squire?"

"That's a good girl," said Martha. "And you won't be naughty any more?"

"No, no, dear," soothed Rosamond, half-frightened, for there is something terrifying in even light delirium if you are not used to it.

"Then kiss him and say you're sorry, dearie," said Martha.

Rosamond turned scarlet, and tried to laugh a little.

"I can't do that, dear. But I'll say I'm sorry."

"Oh, Miss Rosamond, don't be naughty," said Martha, half sitting up and catching her breath painfully.

"She thinks we are children under her care," whispered Mr. Squire, who was pale instead of flushed, like Rosamond.

"No!" said Rosamond, as if she was the child Martha thought her. His bending near to speak to her had made her draw back passionately, for . . . she *wanted* to kiss him. "No!"

She hid her face on one bare arm. He bent closer still, and they had both forgotten all about Martha. He drew her arm away, very gently.

"Rosamond!" he said entreatingly.

The trance that had held her for a moment broke. She sprang up sharply.

"No, not even to soothe Martha!" she said. "You — you would think I was the kind of girl you thought I was — no — no, no!"

He drew back, and stood perfectly still beside her. His eyes burned black, but his face, as ever, was quiet. He did not even put out a hand toward her.

"Forgive me," he said. "No, I'd forgotten Martha. I was in fault. I'd no excuse —"

Rosamond turned her face away farther.

"*I'd* — nearly forgotten her, too —" she said brokenly. "But you think I'm that kind — you mustn't—"

But Martha was beginning to cry out. She could feel the disturbance in the air, and she was becoming very excited. John Squire talked to her soothingly, but it was no use. Rosamond stood against the wall, very still. It did not occur to her to help, or go away, or anything at all. She was shivering from head to foot, and her cheeks and hands burned. She had turned her face away.

She became aware that Squire was beside her again.

"Forgive me," he said once more, this time in a

studiously level voice, "but this — is not discourtesy. It is a matter of necessity to Martha."

He held Rosamond still where she stood, very lightly, and as lightly touched her hot cheek with his lips. Then he turned from her without looking at her, and went to the cot again.

Rosamond could hear him speaking to Martha, and she saw that the old woman was quieting. Presently she fell into her drowse once more. But Rosamond stood still. She was so tired — so very tired! She held by the back of a chair near her, and tried to stand gallantly straight, but her trembling was visible.

Squire lifted himself from bending over Martha, and came over to her again. He spoke with an almost hard abruptness.

"But you know — but you must have known — that I've wanted to marry you nearly ever since I saw you."

She let go the chair and looked at him. He looked so strong and so good — and she was so tired — and it had been so hard to be happy lately, and just to take two steps into his arms would make being happy easier than breathing, and as inevitable. He *was* happiness as he stood there with his eyes agonising into hers. She took one step. She did not know how her hands went out to him and her face lighted. Then she dragged herself back.

"No," she said with an effort. "You don't be-

lieve in me. You don't trust me. You just are in love with me more than you can keep from saying. No — no — no!"

He faced her — big and kind and dominant and handsome and young. The blacklashed, deep-grey eyes she had always loved looked squarely down into hers.

"You're not a coquette," he said. "You're just as transparently honest as a child. I don't think you've been playing with me. . . . Don't you care?"

"Oh, don't!" she answered like a cry of pain.

"Are you going to tell me you don't care?" he asked again.

Rosamond caught up her cloak as if it was a weapon, and flung it around her. She threw up her head and looked at him squarely.

"John, if I adored the ground you walked on I couldn't do anything about it, as long as you thought I didn't have good reason for doing what you think it was wrong for me to do. Oh, let me go — let me go!"

For her voice had softened unmistakably when she spoke of loving him, and a man who knew less about women than John Squire could have known what the look in her eyes meant, and the trembling of her lips. And this time it was not lightly that he held her. And for a moment it seemed to Rosamond that she had never known how much happi-

ness there could be in the world. But she wrenched away.

"I've told you," she said. "You have to believe in me first."

Before he answered she had run out of the room. He could hear her fleet footsteps up the stairs, and the tempestuous sound of her closing door. Neither of them slept that night, but they kept their vigils apart.

When Rosamond came down next morning he had gone. It was late, for she had lingered above purposely. She did not want to face him. She had never lost a night's sleep before, and she felt very tired and languid, and almost as if she could not feel anything at all. She was dimly glad that she had none of the housework to do, and could go outside and lie in the swing-seat. She did not try to eat anything for breakfast.

She tried to fix her mind on things, to plan, but her mind would not do it. It was not a blank; that would have been comparatively easy. It was more like a moving-picture of John Squire. She couldn't say that he was in her mind. He simply *was* it. Every tone of his voice, every word he had ever said to her, everything he had ever done for her or given her came streaming back. Why, it wasn't she who had made Jerrold's dream possible. It was Squire. He had smoothed everything, every way, for her,

made every desire easy of accomplishment. He had been instant in her service. . . .

Suddenly she remembered with a tired whimsicality one of the wild wishes that had shocked Cousin Jenny so. She had wanted to be kissed, just once, by a man she wasn't engaged to. Well, it had happened, last night — though her not being engaged to him was her own fault. She gave a forlorn little laugh. But it wasn't at all amusing. And there was no way out.

"You can't marry a man who thinks you might kiss other people any time on the spur of the moment," thought poor Rosamond forlornly.

It seemed to her that she would die if she had to talk to anybody this day. But out there on her porch she was defenceless against invaders, and little Mrs. Browne, toiling up the steep path from the landing, was a visitor not to be denied.

Rosamond sat up, and tried to look pleased to see her.

"I've had a letter from my step-daughter," she confided when enough greetings had been exchanged, and she had settled herself opposite her hostess with much rustling of skirts and patting of gloves and veils. "So I'm not worried about her, not a bit now, and I needn't bother you to look in the crystal, Miss — Gilbert, isn't it?"

"It is," said Rosamond. "I'm very glad you've

heard from her," she added with weary politeness. "Did you come all this way up just to tell me that?" she added mentally, for she wanted to stay on her swing-seat alone, and think about John Squire with no one to interrupt.

As if in answer, Mrs. Browne crossed her hands on her lap, fixed her blue eyes on Rosamond, and began to hold forth again.

"There's another thing I want to discuss with you," she went on. "Do you mind telling me just how you are situated as regards that pretty little girl who calls you Auntie — Alicia?"

"She is no relation really," said Rosamond in the same tired voice. She saw no reason for being otherwise than frank about it. "I got her from the Children's Aid bureau, which places homeless children. She was with some rather dreadful people when I found her. They were unkind to her. She is a naturally good, well-bred little thing, and I know she is happier with me than she was with them. Only —" Rosamond looked a little vaguely troubled —"she doesn't care for fairy-stories, or climbing trees, and she never lets go, somehow. She makes me feel sometimes as if I were the child, and she the grown person."

"She is the most charming little girl I ever knew," Mrs. Browne affirmed enthusiastically, "and as you say, a natural-born little lady. And as to the rest — why should she read fairy-tales or climb trees?

I never was allowed to do either. She seems to have unusual instincts. Well, what I was going to say was — in short — I should like to adopt the child myself."

"Adopt Allie?" asked Rosamond, wakened at length from her lethargy.

"You really are a little young to have complete charge of a child that old," suggested Mrs. Browne a little apologetically. "Besides, you may form other ties."

"No," said Rosamond in a low voice. "I know I never shall."

"We all say that," said Mrs. Browne with an indulgent little laugh. "But seriously, what do you think of my proposition? I'm independently rich. I have been telling Allie something of this — we have seen quite a little of each other since the day she came down to the hotel. I am quite sure she would be contented with me. I could give her many more advantages than you could, and provide for her at my death, not to speak of putting her in the way of a good marriage. And it isn't as if she were really yours, or you'd even had her long. I assure you, she's attached to me already."

This struck Rosamond as a rather unfair proceeding. Mrs. Browne had been plainly wooing Allie behind her legal guardian's back. It explained a good many of the child's newly-acquired mannerisms and little airs and graces.

"What do you think of my proposition?" persisted Mrs. Browne.

"Will you give me a little time?" asked Rosamond. "Will it do if I telephone you, say, this afternoon?"

"Certainly," acquiesced Mrs. Browne graciously. "There is no such haste as that." And after a little more gracious conversation, she departed, leaving Rosamond with something besides her lover to think about.

But nothing seemed real except her relations with John Squire. She could think about Allie clearly, but not with any excitement. It struck her again as unfair that Mrs. Browne should have tried to win the child before she said anything, but that after all was only because she was the type of woman she was. She meant no harm, and felt as kindly as possible to Rosamond, doubtless. And Allie's own nature — Rosamond could not hide from herself that the little girl was more Mrs. Browne's kind of a person than her own. If Rosamond brought her up in her own gay, careless, unconventional fashion, the child would be unhappy. Life with Mrs. Browne would fit the child as a hand fits a glove.

And then — if Rosamond went away, and she felt that she could not stay here near John Squire, as things were, there would be no place for Allie with her. It would be better to provide for her. The child's willingness to go hurt a little, but it seemed

so natural to her disposition that Rosamond could not take it very hard. She had a feeling to-day as if she could understand everybody's unkind ways, and be sorry for them. . . . She was fond of the child, as one becomes attached to any housemate, but she and Allie were not the same kind of person, and never would be. They could never speak the same language if they lived together thirty years. . . . Yes, there was no question about it, good little prim, positive Allie, whose highest ambition was to be a little lady, would be better off with Mrs. Browne. She would be as content with her as Sydney had been unhappy. So, unless the child was unwilling to go . . . Rosamond sighed a little. It seemed as though everything was going. She felt that she wouldn't be surprised if her bungalow rose in the air next, like Aladdin's palace, and flew away, with only a cellar left behind to tell the tale.

"I must ask Mr. Squire what to do," came her first automatic impulse, before she remembered. No, there was no more asking John Squire. She had been turning to him for everything so much that it left a very large empty feeling. Never to ask him what to do again — how should she manage? . . . Well, there was still Jerrold.

She dragged herself in the house and telephoned him.

"Could you spare a minute or so to advise me about something?" she asked."

Jerrold, though he must have been busy, said he would be up in an hour, and Rosamond went back to her swing-seat with a feeling that she had one comfort left, if only a little one. Jerrold had seemed quieter and less light hearted with her lately, as if he was working too hard. That was a pity. It would have been pleasant if he had been brighter. But he remained to her out of the wreck. She would try to see a very great deal of him; make him seem like a real piece of her life, not just trimmings.

When he came she welcomed him with as much of her old gaiety as she could produce. She was in a half unhappy, half excited state, for even if you can't marry people because they don't trust you, it is a consolation to know they love you. . . . She dragged her mind back from its persistent questing off after John Squire, and had Richard sit down by her.

"What on earth's that?" she asked, as he produced a package of dimensions from his hat, which had been in his hand.

"That," said Richard cheerfully, "is a Realised Dream. Your voice sounded mournful over the telephone, so I brought you something you said you wanted, once. You told me you had a passionate desire to eat ice-cream in the morning. This is the ice-cream, and this —" he waved his hand largely around —"is the morning. Have you spoons?"

Rosamond began to laugh quite spontaneously as

she went in after spoons and plates. They ate the ice-cream solemnly, as if it was more or less of a rite, and she began to feel happier. After they were quite done (it really did have a daring and enjoyable feeling, especially as Rosamond had had no breakfast) she put her problem to Richard. It seemed queer to ask him, not John Squire.

"Let Mrs. Browne have the child by all means," Richard advised her promptly. "You and Allie could never be a real comfort to each other. No matter how fond you were of one another you would always be getting on each other's nerves, when she grew old enough to be a personage in the house. In a few years she would be bringing *you* up. You've done everything you can do for her, and it wouldn't be fair for you to let her pass up this opportunity. Anyhow, if I know Mrs. Browne, when she wants a thing she gets it. If you refuse, she may go to the Children's Aid and convince *them* that she's a better guardian of youth than you. She's a nice little soul, thoroughly feminine, but—"

"Thank you," said Rosamond. "You needn't go on. Thoroughly feminine explains it. If Allie wants to, and I'm fairly sure she does, she goes, and learns to be a 'porch-cat,' as a friend of mine would say. Well, I suppose it's her destiny. Oh, dear, Dick, what would I do without you? You're the only dream that's going right a bit! . . . *Is* the hotel going right?"

"Oh, yes," he answered indifferently. "I'll have enough money to give the engine a start, even if I don't sell to Chisum. But it's pretty certain that I will."

"You don't sound as if you cared," she said. "What's the matter, Dick?"

"Nothing," he answered. "I keep a porch-cattery myself, you know, and it's a bit wearing at times."

She looked at his tired face.

"Tell me, please," she said. "You know I do know how to help. Dicky, what have they been doing to you?"

"I'd rather not go into it," said he.

"I'd rather you would," she persisted.

"Well, if you will have it," he burst out, swinging round to face her, "it's been hard . . . giving you up."

"Giving me up!" echoed Rosamond, sitting back aghast.

"Oh, I know I never had you to give," he assented, "but there was a while when — well, when I thought I could make you like me. It all seemed to fit in, you and I getting married, and sailing off to have a wild good time, you and your fairy-tales and your laughter and your 'why nots?' Then — well, of course pretty soon I began to see how things were between you and Squire, and I just dropped

out. I wasn't the prince in your fairy-tale, after all. . . . Oh, it's all right. As long as my engine goes through I'll have something to go on with. I'm getting over it," he went on with the appalling frankness of the one-ideaed; or it may have been bravery, Rosamond never decided which. "That's all. I'm not going to stop being friends with you, Rosamond. There are few enough people like you in the world — I don't want to miss any I can help. . . . Guess I'll go now. I have a lot to do down there. Call me up any time you want any help about things."

He was off down the path, shoulders up, fair crest of hair blowing in the wind, before Rosamond could answer or contradict him.

She made no effort to call him back. She knew that what he had said he meant. They were going to be friends always, just the same. But she couldn't ask him to be anything more than friends, because things *were* "between her and Squire." She knew suddenly that if she couldn't have John there wasn't any one else she wanted. Only — one's last prop gone!

After that it scarcely mattered that Allie, summoned to the bungalow to give her views on being passed over to Mrs. Browne, appeared as willing as Mrs. Browne had said she would be.

"You'd be getting married, she said," remarked

'Allie, "an' I'd be in the way. I'll like it all right — only —" Allie clung to Rosamond for a moment —"only I can see you lots, can't I?"

"Just as much as ever you like, darling," Rosamond assured her. "And I don't want you to go unless you're perfectly willing."

"I'll try it," said Allie.

She seemed non-committal. After all, a child who has been passed from hand to hand all her life cannot be otherwise. So that was settled, too. And Mrs. Browne came and got Allie that afternoon, and Rosamond sat in the ruins of her dreams and thought about Cousin George and the joys, after all, of stenography or private secretarying. Maybe John Squire would come in some time, far, far off, and dictate a letter. And his wife would be with him, a very haughty, stiff, handsome blonde person with diamonds and an air of ownership. And she would take the letter beautifully, and after they were gone she would cry, and cry and cry. . . .

So she did not wait for that nightmare future. She curled down just where she was, for the cushion was soft and could sop up tears admirably. And she cried and cried and cried.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE LAST DREAM

THINGS were very forlorn. Allie was gone. The Knightly Lover had given Rosamond up. Even Martha, who was some comfort, would be better soon and leave her. There didn't seem to be anything at all to anything.

Rosamond went in after she had cried thoroughly, and washed the tears off. She bathed and dressed for the afternoon in the prettiest clothes she could find, with a view to comforting herself a little. Then she went back to the living-room and sat on the couch. She was afraid more callers would come if she went outside.

It was the most detestable time of day, with the freshness of the morning gone, and the relaxation of the evening not yet come. The sunlight felt glaring and the room stale. She hadn't the courage to do anything to occupy her time. She had dogged thoughts of going back to live with Cousin George and repentantly taking up stenography, and never, never, never doing anything to make herself or anybody else happy again as long as she lived. . . .

But. . . . Supposing she broke her promise to Sydney, and told John Squire that it was a girl she had kissed on the train? . . . Even then he mightn't believe her. It did sound wild. So many true things do; they are not as artistic as made-by-hand lies. . . . But she couldn't break her promise. Honour was honour, and as long as Sydney chose to masquerade up at Green's Corners, so long Rosamond must keep the secret. . . . John Squire loved her. But he couldn't trust her not to do wild things. She knew that, and it hurt. Because Rosamond herself not only loved him, but she trusted him absolutely. Nobody could help trusting John Squire, to be sure. But it wasn't fair — oh, it wasn't fair that it shouldn't be even.

"You can't marry people when they won't believe that you might have good reasons for being kissed by another man," said Rosamond desolately to Darling, who, with his unfailing instinct for being a comforter in trouble, had slid out of his basket and was looking up at her. She pulled him into her arms and went on thinking — thinking around in circles. They were perfectly water-tight circles. Not all her tears washed out one bit of them. She was still sitting in a heap with her head on one hand, patting Darling mechanically with the other, when without any warning at all, John Squire came in and over to her without a word. He lifted the dog gently off her lap, and as gently put his arm around her, and be-

gan to reason with her as if she were a child. She was too tired and unhappy to resist him.

"Is there any reason on earth," he said, "for making yourself miserable, and me miserable, and spoiling everything for both of us for always? Or, at least, spoiling things for me," he amended, exact even in his love-making. "I suppose you'll marry somebody else sometime. You're too lovely and too attractive to be let alone." She felt his arm tighten jealously about her at the thought. "I shan't get over it, I'm afraid. I don't get through with things quickly, worse luck."

"Neither do I! Neither do I!" cried Rosamond stormily, flinging self-control to the winds, and her arms around his neck. "I'll never, never care for anybody but you as long as I live, and you know it! You have no business to think I could! If you really trusted me you'd know I'd care always, if you died this minute. It's been coming on ever since I saw you. There's nobody like you on earth. There isn't another man on earth that I care if he lives or dies. And I *know you* couldn't do anything wrong, even if I caught you standing over Martha with a big red knife you'd just pulled out of her. I'd just say — why, I'd say: 'He had to do it, or he never would have! It's a thing everybody does!' and it's cruel and unfair that you won't feel the same way to me."

He put his other arm around her.

"But, darling, I *can't*," he explained. "Facts are facts."

"They are no such thing!" said Rosamond. "Or at least there wouldn't be if you loved me one bit as I love you."

"I can't believe that it was all right for you to let a man you'd only known one day kiss you," he said. "But I want to forget all about it, and start over. Won't you be merciful and let that do, sweetheart? Oh, Rosamond, if you knew how lonely I was, and how much more I need you than anybody else could anybody else with other people to care for, you'd give in. There's nothing else on earth for me but you. I can't think differently from my real thoughts, child. I don't think you want me to lie to you. But isn't this a small thing, to make two people who love each other as we do unhappy for? Real love is a very rare thing, Rosamond. And it's a rarer thing still when two people have real love, each for the other. And I think we have. We mustn't waste it, dear. The world isn't full of it."

Rosamond had kept her eyes on his face while he talked, like a child. Now she laid her head down on his shoulder again, as if it were a very logical resting-place for it, and answered him. Her movement was like a child's, but it was not the gay, childishly happy, whimsical Rosamond he knew that spoke. It was a womanly Rosamond, who had what seemed an older wisdom.

"It is just because we do love each other in every way there is that I can't give in, my dear," she said quietly. "It's such a good love that I want it to be perfect, or not there at all. And until you can trust me, in spite of appearances, as blindly as I would trust you, there can't be anything. I don't want condonation because I am a dear, irresponsible child whom you love too much not to forgive. . . . So till you can believe in me against your own eyes, I think we had better not see any more of each other. . . . Because. . . . I'd give in if I did. So I'm going back to East Warren. I've had a very happy time here, and perhaps I can have one there. Why . . . why not?"

But it was a forlorn little "why not?" and it hurt John Squire to hear it.

"Why not?" he said, the more brusquely because of the hurt. "Because you won't have any of the materials. If you love me as you say you do, I'll be in your mind too much for you to collect your thoughts about being happy. Rosamond darling—"

Rosamond, whose ears were quick, sprang away from him, and leaped to her feet with her cheeks burning. John Squire sat still and looked as if nothing had happened. For the door had been flung open without the shadow of a ceremony, and Sydney, dusty, stained and crumpled — Sydney, the *fons et origo mali*, burst in.

She did not seem to notice Rosamond's tear-marked face, nor the man on the couch. She was too much interested in her own troubles.

"Rosamond!" she panted, "I've got to have my clothes this minute!"

"Does Miss Gilbert look after your laundry as a part of her duties?" demanded Mr. Squire rebukingly. Naturally, he hated this young man.

"You don't understand," answered Rosamond, whose face had lighted rapturously at this blessed chance of a way out. "Sydney, go upstairs and get a bath. I'll be up with your things before you need them. There's a red kimono behind my door, and the towels are in the cedar chest."

Sydney mounted the stairs two at a time, and Rosamond turned swiftly to her lover.

"Have you enough faith in me to wait here for another half hour, while I go up and look after Sydney?" she demanded. "If you have you *may* get your explanation."

She was being as nearly defiant as she could manage, but her voice and face were tender in spite of her.

John Squire bent and kissed her gently.

"My dear little girl, I will wait just as long as you want me to," he answered. "Go up and look after your friend."

They were both too excited to realise that he was

trusting her about as fully as she could ever require him to.

Rosamond kissed him back gratefully, and ran up. Sydney made short work of her bath, and by the time Rosamond had her clothes assembled she was ready for them. She sat down on her friend's bed and began to hurry them on.

"What makes you in so much of a hurry?" Rosamond asked, very naturally, as Sydney "madly crammed a right-hand foot into a left-hand shoe."

"I told Mattison to be here in half an hour," said Sydney, as she stopped to fasten her slippers. They were the same graceful white kid things she had kicked off so scornfully not so very long before. "He's horribly punctual, and I lost time falling in a creek."

"Oh, then you've told him —"

"I haven't told him anything," said Sydney. "I'm going to *show* him."

She sat up and began fastening something else. Her cheeks were brilliant through the tan, and her eyes were bright. She had filled out and gained grace and poise, out in the woods. She had also gained three inches chest and two waist-measure, and her linen gown of that bygone day simply would not meet at all. So Rosamond had to produce one of her own dresses, a heavy white tussore that mercifully could have a yellow sash added to it. It was

short for Sydney, but none the less becoming for that, because it showed the dainty silk-clad ankles and small, prettily-shod feet that poor Sydney had dreamed of through so many evenings of substantial buckskin ties. Sydney let Rosamond clasp amber beads around her neck, and herself suggested yellow ribbons at the sleeve-ruffles.

When it was all done she looked in the glass with what began to be a sigh of satisfaction. But it turned into a very mournful one, as she said, "Oh, my hair!"

"I got a transformation for you, and there's still that double plait. I think I can do it," said Rosamond hopefully. She was as much excited as Sydney. "Your hair's pretty long for a boy."

"I haven't had it cut since I went away. I—I couldn't, somehow," confessed Sydney. "What's a transformation?"

"A sort of portière of hair that you fasten round your head, and it pulls up over or under our real hair," answered Rosamond, getting it out and going to work.

It wasn't easy, but between transformation and plait, and a final yellow ribbon, they managed to make a very stately lady out of Syd the late Green's Corners kid.

"You're lots better looking," said Rosamond. "Why, you're positively handsome, my dear. What have you been doing?"

"Falling in love," Sydney answered with prompt frankness. "Rosamond, I'm nearly crazy. For heaven's sake, don't ask any questions. I'm either going to hate you for the rest of my life for suggesting this insane performance of mine, or adore you to my dying day, and teach my children to after me. I'll know in about ten minutes. Oh, Rosamond, *don't* ask me!"

"I'm not likely to," said Rosamond, who guessed pretty accurately for one thing, and was rather occupied by her own problems for another.

"I'm ready to go now," said Sydney, after she had used powder and perfumes luxuriously.

"All right, go ahead," said Rosamond cheerfully.

"I can't!" quivered Sydney in a sudden access of fright. "He might be down there before you came, and I don't dare face him alone."

"Then wait till I wash my face," said Rosamond.

"Oh, you've been crying," Sydney bethought herself to notice. "What's the matter?"

Rosamond went over to the stationary washstand in the corner of her room and began to splash her face with cold water.

"I'll only say what you said to me," she returned from the depths of a towel, "in ten minutes I'll either love you or hate you to my dying day."

"Then there's a man," said Sydney, pacing the floor in her impatience to go. "Come to think of

it, I did see one on the couch, when I tore through. Big, stunning looking one."

"There was," said Rosamond dryly, straightening her loosed hair before the glass. "Come on downstairs." She was her usual buoyant, half-laughing, half-whimsical self by now. "Come on down and meet him."

She led the way swiftly, laughing under her breath as she went: the old Rosamond to whom this world was the best of all possible worlds.

"Mr. Squire," she began at the foot of the stairs, catching Sydney's hand and pulling her along, "this is Miss Browne, a friend of mine you have seen twice before. Do you remember where and when?"

He sprang to his feet, grasping the situation.

"Do you mean —"

"I told you there was a good reason," said Rosamond, laughing joyously. "Didn't I?"

John Squire paid very little attention to the fact of a third person's presence. He flung his arm around Rosamond's waist in a way that would have shocked Mrs. Browne, not to say Cousin George, and pulled her close. He held out his unoccupied hand to Sydney.

"Miss Browne, words are inadequate to tell you how glad I am to meet you!" said he fervently.

But Sydney scarcely heard, nor stopped to be shocked at an embrace performed in her presence.

She was listening to footsteps, and for a knock which came a moment later.

"Oh, Rosamond, I can't face him!" she said in terror. "You go!"

She made for the stairs, but Rosamond was too quick for her, and blocked the way.

"Open the door, John!" she said hurriedly, and John Squire smiled and obeyed.

It admitted a hurried and dusty young man, who looked around him as if in search of some one he did not see.

"Come in, Mr. Mattison," welcomed Rosamond from where she held the stair. "Here is Sydney Browne, whom I think you are looking for."

"Do you know him?" demanded Sydney in a bewildered whisper.

"I sent him to you, dear," Rosamond responded, with the imp of mischief shining behind her eyes. "The least you can do is to be polite to him."

Mattison seemed a worthy subject for courtesy, for he came toward the girls with a look of utter bewilderment on his face. Sydney seemed tongue-tied. She struggled to get away from Rosamond's hold. Mattison, too, seemed unable to say anything. So on Rosamond fell the burden of explanation.

"Sydney Browne is a girl," she said to Mattison very slowly and clearly. "She always was. She went off into the woods to be a boy because she wanted to get away from the insincerity and frivolity she'd

always believed were an inseparable part of girl-life. I'd think you'd better ask her yourself why she's going back to being one again. If you don't hold her wrists she'll get away. . . . Take her, for goodness sake! . . . John, we can talk just as well outside."

She pushed Sydney's wrists into the hands of the still dazed Mattison, who, however, managed to hold them tight. Rosamond laughed sweetly, and with shining eyes and flushed cheeks slipped out, toward the little wood beyond her bungalow. John Squire followed close behind. But as they went they could see that Mattison had caught Sydney by the shoulders.

"Is it real, kid?" they heard him say. "It can't be. It's all the wonderful things in the world come true."

And Sydney, flinging herself against his arm, was crying passionately, "Oh, you do care for me, don't you, Jim, better than anybody else — better than anybody else at all?"

Rosamond, softly shutting the door, smiled up at John Squire.

"I never asked you that," she said, slipping her hand in his.

"That was because you knew, my dear," said he. "And — you'll forgive me?"

Rosamond laughed.

"Why, of course!" said she. "Because *I* love *you*

better than anybody else — better than anybody else at all!"

They were kind, and they stayed wandering in the little woods for quite a while. By the time they came back Sydney and Mattison were sitting comradely side by side in the swing-seat, and they had apparently settled everything. Sydney's short black hair hung loose about her face.

"Jim says those braids and things are in the way, and he likes it best this way anyhow," she explained as Rosamond bent forward and bound the straight, thick locks fillet-wise with the yellow ribbon. "I'm going down to stay with Adeline at the hotel to-night. I called her up, and she's so pleased to find that I didn't go mad in that mythical sanatorium that she never asked one question. Jim's going to stay there too — he's a friend of the manager. We were just waiting till you came back to say good-bye. All my trunks are there."

In Sydney's eyes there gleamed at last the normal feminine look, twin to love of man — love of clothes to look beautiful for him in. "There's a crepe-de-chine nightgown among my things upstairs, that I've never worn," she added in a lower tone. "Please keep it, Rosamond, as a remembrancer."

She did not know why Rosamond laughed.

"The last dream!" said she. "Thank you, Sydney. I happened to want one badly. My canoe's at the dock. Send it back by one of the coloured boys

when you get ready. John — I'm going to kiss Sydney again!"

She looked mischievously over her shoulder at her lover, as she kissed Sydney heartily. But he only smiled. And the porch-seat was their own again, by daylight and starlight.

It was starlight when they sat there once more, for telling Martha all about it took a long, confused, happy time, and then it was time for their dinner together. After it was over John went back to his own forgotten house for a little while, to see that everything was going smoothly there. When he returned Rosamond ran swiftly down the path to meet him.

"John!" she called gladly. "I've just remembered something — something wonderful! I've realised all my dreams, every single one! All the things I came here wanting. I've been sitting here counting them over. *All.*"

"Do you want to tell me about it?" he asked, sitting down beside her in the swing-seat again.

"Of course! In fact, I have to. I want to tell you everything as long as I live, and as long as it won't bore you."

He laughed at that.

"The minute you enter the room boredom leaves," he assured her. "Tell me, please, or I'll think you haven't fully decided to share my joys and sorrows."

She leaned back against his arm and began to count them over on her fingers.

"I wanted a house on the edge of the woods," she said. "This was it. I bought it of a big man I was rather afraid of."

"He was rather afraid of you," Squire answered.

"You seem to have recovered," suggested Rosamond. "Well, the next thing was — a Livonian bloodhound. And I got that."

She laughed a little but he remained quite serious.

"No, you didn't, but you shall," he said. "You were right and we were wrong. There *are* Livonian bloodhounds. Livonia's below Finland — belongs to Russia. The dogs are quite famous. I ought to have known it. It will take a little time to get you a really fine specimen, but he's ordered."

"Oh, how lovely!" said Rosamond. "Because Livy ought to be thrown in with Allie, anyway. I'll keep him till then. . . . Well — to go on, I wanted to tell fortunes for a living. I didn't *exactly* do that."

"I think you have told all our fortunes," he said, "or created them; mine and Jerrold's and Miss Browne's and Allie's and Mr. Mattison's."

"Why, so I have!" said Rosamond happily. "At least, I've helped get things straight, haven't I? Well, and I wanted to be looked up to. Allie did that for awhile. I think she was dangerously near getting over it."

"I look up to you myself," suggested her lover, "if it's any help."

"Important if true," said Rosamond. "We'll let that pass. . . . You seem to be getting into all my dreams, John Squire! . . . And I wanted a silk night-gown. Sydney gave me that just before she went. And ice-cream in the forenoon — Jerrold brought me up some this very morning, and you don't know how soothing it was. My heart was nearly broken."

"Poor little girl! Well, I'll know how to keep you happy, then," said he. "What next?"

"To — I'd rather not tell that," said Rosamond, getting pink. "You mightn't —"

"Stop that!" said he rather peremptorily. "After this I shall believe in you, even if you tell me yourself I shouldn't."

"Well, if you're sure," said she. "It was — to be kissed just once by some one I wasn't engaged to. But it was you," she hastened to add. "And it was plenty. I don't want that any more. You see, I never *did* have any man kiss me but you, and it seemed mortifying, a little. Most girls have, I'm sure."

"You are an angel," said John Squire, quite irrelevantly as it seemed to Rosamond, "and there isn't a man on earth good enough for you. But I'm glad I have the position."

"So am I, of course," said Rosamond. . . . They did not talk any more for a little while.

"And so she got everything?" said he presently, in the tone he would have used to a very dear child.

"You can just pick me up and put me back
where you got me from, Master Johnnie"

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Rosamond remembered and lifted her head and laughed a little.

"Why, no!" she said. "She didn't. I'd quite forgotten. I wanted to lie on the grass and look up at stars, and not have any one to say 'come in or you'll catch cold.' I've never done that yet, and now — now that you're going to be my landlord and master for life, I suppose I never shall."

John Squire laughed. But he was ever more a man of action than of words. One of his arms was around Rosamond's waist already, and he had merely to put the other one beneath her to stand up, carrying her in his arms. He walked down off the porch with her, across the little lawn, into the borders of the pines, till they came to an open spot. There he laid her gently down on the dry pine-needles, and sat down beside her. Then he bent and kissed her.

"Go ahead and look at all the stars there are, my darling," he said. "If you ever have an unsatisfied wish in the world it shan't be my fault."

But Rosamond did not avail herself of his permission. She sat up straight and stared at him.

"Do you mean to say that you aren't going to stop me, or mind whether I catch cold from the dew or not?" she demanded aggrievedly.

"A strong young girl like you?" he replied placidly. "If you do as much travelling with me as I think you will we'll sleep in many a wetter place than that. And why should I worry you by fussing at

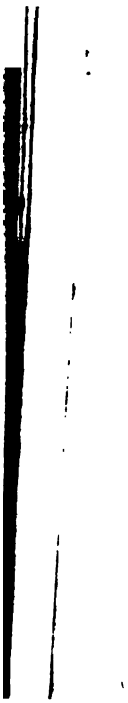
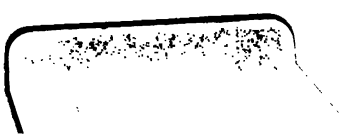
you? You're as much of a reasonable being as I am. It's very simple, dear. If I love you enough naturally I want you to be happy in your own way. If you love me enough it'll be the same thing. It's only the little love that ties people up. We haven't that kind."

"No, we haven't that kind," echoed Rosamond softly. But presently she laughed and nestled up to him like a kitten. "You can just pick me up and put me back where you got me from, Master Johnnie," she said. "I don't see what I want to look at stars for, anyway. I'd much rather look at you."

He laughed too, and lifted her obediently.

"But wasn't there one more thing?" he asked.

"There was a Knightly Lover," she said. . . . "He's you."

And they lived happily ever, ever after. . . . Why not?

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